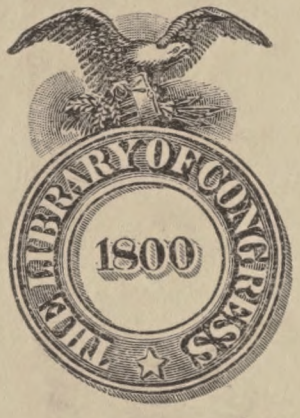

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MYRTLE LAWN.

A NOVEL.

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BY ROBERT E. BALLARD.

OF NORTH CAROLINA.

35

"MYRTLE LAWN" *is an American romance of real life—a story almost of the present, so near to our time do the incidents occur. The narrative opens in Mexico, with the history of a patriotic family there, to which Nora Lavine, one of the heroines of the tale, belongs by descent. The home-scenes of this romance, which are admirably presented, take place in a beautiful village in Maryland, in which three families reside, respectively named Melton, Evarts, and Lavine. The heads of these families are respectively two merchant princes, and Mrs. Lavine, the widow of a Colonel in the Confederate Army. There are two sons, Henry Melton and Horace Evarts, who form deep attachments to Jeannette Evarts and Nora Lavine. But, as "the course of true love never yet ran smooth," the elder Mr. Melton, who has very ambitious views for his son, forbids him to associate any longer with Miss Evarts, whom he has known since childhood, and the younger Mr. Evarts, having become jealous of Nora Lavine, leaves his native land in despair, and joins the Spanish army, then engaged in civil war, and greatly distinguishes himself in actual conflict. The crowning merit of* "MYRTLE LAWN" *will be found in the description of a battle-scene in Spain, during the Carlist war. It is a panoramic painting in words, such as Scott or Macaulay might have dashed off in a happy hour of literary excitement. There is nothing of the sort finer in modern fiction. The dialogues and correspondence in this tale are admirable, and the author's stream of narrative is at once clear, strong, and rapid.*—CRITIC.

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TO

GID BRANCH ALSTON, ESQ.

OF

WARREN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA,

AS A

MARK OF MY ADMIRATION FOR HIS QUALITIES AS A GENTLEMAN AND A SCHOLAR; AND AS A TOKEN OF MY GRATITUDE FOR THAT UNWAVERING FRIENDSHIP WHICH HAS ALWAYS PROVED STRONGEST WHEN MOST NEEDED,

THIS WORK IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

WARREN COUNTY, N. C., *November*, 1879.

AUTHOR'S EDITION.

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MYRTLE LAWN.

BY ROBERT E. BALLARD.

OF NORTH CAROLINA.

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND SON.

GOD had smiled upon a vast nation of people, and blessed them with all that was great, glorious and good. Their domains extended from ocean to ocean, and from the lakes and mountains of the north to the far-away tropic climes, and to the southern gulf-streams. At one extremity, fruits ripened and fragrant flowers gladdened the senses; while on the other, ice glistened on the mountains and amidst the lakes. Their cities glowed with splendor and magnificence. Their halls of learning were filled with the grandest strains of music and oratory. Their homes were gushing with loves and joys, and wealth and happiness. Their rivers were plowed by palace-like steamers, and seas were white with their commerce, while their vessels were freighted with cereals, luxuries and comforts, for the teeming thousands of other lands.

Alas! this great and happy people forgot God. They lost sight of the Hand from whence this unbounded munificence flowed. They fell into all manner of excesses and evil indulgences—revelled in luxury, ease and sensuality; made idols of their Mammon and of their lusts, and found themselves floundering in a sea of materialism and infidelity; and—*God smote them with the woes of a fratricidal war.* The great sections of the South stood arrayed against the great sections of the North. Revolutionary guns battered the old Stars and Stripes, floating from the walls of Sumpter. The cry of battle rang from every hill and vale, and a million men sprang to arms. Brother betrayed brother; father, son; and parents, children. From a thousand hills, ten thousand guns belched forth fire and death, and the flowers in a thousand valleys lost their tints in a hue more crimson.

Men were maddened as the wild beasts of the forests; and onward and ceaseless flowed the crimson tide. Cries of anguish went out from every household in the broad land. The young widow, with the sleeping babe at her breast, rained scalding tears upon its face, as she thought of the slaughtered father. The heart-broken mother bewailed in bitterness the death of her only son. Fathers bade adieu to prattling children; husbands, farewell to weeping wives, and—*came no more.* The tender, lovely maiden cast her arms around the lover's neck, and, unblushing, gave the kiss that proved the last. On the field of slaughter, brother saw the bloody corpse of brother, and father turned pale and shuddered as he stumbled upon the upturned face

of son, white in death; then hurried on to find his own reeking grave. Fields were laid waste, cities were burnt, homes were blighted, hearts were crushed, and an impenetrable pall of woe hung all over the land.

Four long, interminable years! What deeds of heroism that were never known! What wails of sorrow that were never heard! Then men and women and children — powerless in the dust, and prostrate in despair — cried aloud in their misery; and, lifting up their eyes and their hearts, and stretching out their hands to Heaven, implored help. Then God's anger melted; His wrath was turned to mercy, and He sent the white-winged angel "Peace" to spread its pinions o'er the bleeding land. God stayed the Nation's flow of blood, and healed its wounds.

* * * * * *

About ten years had flown since the beginning of that awful era, and nearly six since its close. A people that had shown valor in war, proved that they could be brave in peace. Where homes had been burnt, new homes were springing up. Where cities had been destroyed, new cities were being built. Business, industry, life and hope were being revived. Across the bloody chasm, brother was shaking hands with brother, and from the monuments that marked the resting places of illustrious Dead, faces looked calmly upon a land that was beginning to smile with peace and plenty.

* * * * * *

In a stately-looking, brown-stone mansion, in a beautiful village, not many miles distant from Maryland's great business and commercial city, there lived a

princely old merchant. He was a widower, and had an only child. Edwin Melton was a determined, worldly, business man, but he was one of the noble representatives of his type. He was rich. He owned large factories, was a heavy operator — and a successful one — in stocks and cotton, and carried on a commission business, which had its patrons from Pennsylvania to Louisiana and Texas. Edwin Melton was proud — not foolishly so — hardly consciously so. He was proud of his manhood; proud of the position he so successfully maintained; proud of the fortune which his own determined will and efforts had built up about him — a fortune which not even the storms of war had shaken, and in which there was not a single dishonest dollar; and above all, he was proud in his conscious self-reliance. About the theories of religion and immortality he never declared any decided views; and it is strange that he did not, for he possessed no mean order of mind; but the fact is, his ideas and tastes were so intensely practical, that he would not allow his mind to dwell long on any subject that he could not reduce by his regular rules of life.

Edwin Melton was not miserly, nor stingy; and, while he *could not* stop or stoop to look upon the ragged beggar that asked alms in his pathway, he gave freely and largely to institutions of charity or of learning. His ruling power was ambition. He loved his money because he knew it would help to pave the way to the height where he was determined the feet of his son should rest. We have said "above all, Edwin Melton was proud of his own strength." *Above all*, he was proud of his son.

When the dark shadow was cast over the lordly merchant's heart and home, by the death of the fair, gentle creature who was the wife of his bosom, this boy's bright face, radiant with beauty and intelligence, shed the first ray upon the gloom, and brought the first healing balm to the wounded spirit. His innocent prattle and musical laughter softened the sorrow that weighed upon the worldly man's heart, and with little Henry about him, the poignancy of his grief was fast losing its sting, while he gazed into the sparkling eye and busied his mind in painting bright pictures and a glorious future for his son.

In the meantime, the lad, too young to feel the deep loss he had sustained in the death of his gentle, loving mother, romped and scampered over the paternal mansion, or, with eyes dancing with fun and merriment, rode his wooden horse, or chased the fowls and fawns on the great green of Melton Mansion.

Time passed on, and the boy grew up a bright, handsome, promising youth, with intellect sparkling in every feature, and with a soul like his mother's—kind, amiable, generous; yet, at his early age, with the determined will and ambition characteristic of the father. The best instructors of youth in the country, were secured for his benefit, and the rapid progress he made and the facility he evinced in acquiring knowledge, verified fully the intellectual promise of his childhood. He was the pride of the old merchant's heart, and the sunlight of his home; and Edwin Melton would sooner have given up his untold wealth than his ambitious dreams for his son.

Those ambitious dreams were outlined to him after he arrived at the age of sixteen, and was on the eve of his departure for a renowned college in England, in the following words:

"Well, Henry, to-morrow you will leave for England, not to return until the expiration of your collegiate course, which will require three years. I shall miss you sadly, my son — yes, very sadly; but I shall be consoled in a great measure, by the reflection that you are preparing yourself to fill a high and an honorable position in life, and to act a noble part on the world's wide stage. I shall be satisfied with no mediocrities. I want you to stand first among your classmates, as I expect you to be with the foremost among your fellow-men. I do not consider it necessary for me to warn you of the breakers whereon many a young man's barque is wrecked; for I give you credit for too much character and too much good sense, to suppose for a moment that you would suffer yourself to be led astray from the paths of sobriety and virtue. I do not wish you to squander money, but I do not wish you to stint yourself in its use. I will send with you, a letter of credit, on a House in London, and you can draw at your discretion. At the expiration of your college studies, I shall look for your return with intense pride and pleasure, and will expect to find in you a gentleman and scholar, who will prove an ornament to any society, and fitted for any vocation or profession we may choose."

CHAPTER II.

OLD FRIENDS.

THREE years had just completed their last days. The fleeting time had brought no apparent change at Melton Mansion. The outwardly cold-looking, stately, old stone building, towering above the pretty and less pretentious cottages and edifices in the vicinity, seemed to be a fit emblem of the character of its lordly occupant. Edwin Melton's business had continued to prosper. Every plan and wish had come to fruition. His son, tall and handsome, full of buoyancy, health and hope, had just returned from the distant university, laden with honors that he had won. Edwin Melton was in the zenith of his pride and glory; and if the question had been put to the robust, hale, well-preserved man of fifty-five, on that gushing spring morning, as he rode behind his dashing steeds, towards the city, "What else wilt thou have," he would have been mute for an answer, whilst thousands of poor, all over the land were thanking God that their lots were no harder; were thanking Him for the morsel that stayed the hunger of pleading children, and for the hope that moved the arm for toil. Man, in his pride, and wealth, and luxury, in his egotism and self-reliance, never once thought of the hand from whence his good gifts came.

Henry Melton was spending the first day after his

arrival in re-familiarizing himself with things about the old Mansion; responding to some complimentary notes and invitations; passing an hour or two in the high-walled library, filled with all manner of books; wandering among the grounds about the building, and a little while at a lone spot, where a white marble tombstone glistened among the shrubbery down by the garden wall. As he bent his knee upon the vine-covered mound, an opening flower caught a falling tear. Many years before, a boyish hand had planted those flowers there, and they blossomed yet, on the mother's grave.

Later in the day, towards the approach of evening, as young Melton was leaning against one of the huge pillars that supported the great porch of the Mansion, his musings were interrupted by the approach of a footstep. Turning, he had only time to rise and stretch out his hands, exclaiming almost joyously: "Horace Evarts, as I live!" Their greeting was cordial in the extreme. Horace Evarts appeared scarcely as old as young Melton. He was a tall, graceful figure, richly and tastily dressed, and generally of prepossessing appearance. He wore rather long black locks, and the eyes which shone from beneath a high forehead, were of the same color, and sparkled with mischievous twinkle, or softened with a gentle lustre as he greeted his friend. Evarts, like Melton, was the son of a merchant, who did business in the same neighboring city, and the fathers of the young men had been close friends for very many years. They lived within half an hour's walk of each other, and the two sons had grown up

from childhood intimately associated; and, as the years brought them to the dawn of manhood, their friendship had been cemented. As Melton had just returned the day previous, Evarts had not seen him before during the last three years. The feelings of the young friends after so long a separation, would not be hard to imagine.

After spending nearly an hour in the most friendly intercourse, young Evarts arose, and, offering his hand, said:

"Henry, I must see you every day, but I have to go now. I hate to tear myself away, but I have an engagement to ride at five o'clock, and see it only lacks a few minutes to that hour. In addition to my own personal irrepressible desire to see you, I was prompted by my father to call and let you know that you are not forgotten at the 'Lawn.' Jeannette also sends her compliments, and all three say that we will listen to no excuse whatever, but will expect you to tea this evening."

"Really, Horace, I thank your father, Miss Jeannette, and yourself, for this evidence of your kind regards and remembrance. Please tender my most respectful compliments to your father and sister, and say that I will respond with pleasure, to the invitation which does me so much honor. But pray, my dear fellow, what pressing engagement can it be that calls you so imperatively away from an old friend, that hasn't seen you for years?"

"Ah! Henry; that is a secret:—a secret, Henry, for the present, even for you," and with a gay, good-

humored "good evening," he bounded down the steps, and was gone.

Horace Evarts, like Henry Melton, had not known a mother's love since early childhood: but grew up with amiable, gentle disposition, and possessed fair mental traits. As time passed, he grew into a gay, careless, handsome lad, with flowing dark hair, and a mischievous sparkle in his black eyes, a popular favorite, and young ladies' "beau-ideal" of manly beauty. He was ever ready and witty, with a never ceasing flow of happy spirits; was kind, unselfish, and always willing to sacrifice his own pleasure to that of those he loved; with a nature warm and sociable, and generous to a fault. These traits were in common with both his parents. From his father, likewise, he inherited a spirit of indolence, rather than of energy, with a love of ease and high living; and, while he had a fine sense of honor, and would die sooner than brook an insult to himself or friend, he inherited none of the pride of intellect or aspiring ambition that so positively characterized the head of Melton Mansion. If the two young men differed in this respect they had never discerned it; and, although they had been warm friends and almost constant companions, up to the period when they were separated on going to different colleges, they had never studied each other's characters, and were bound by a common friendship and congeniality. After their long separation it was perfectly natural they should have been drawn together again by emotions of fellowship and sympathy.

Young Evarts had an only sister; a sweet, pure little

girl of sixteen, with soft blue eyes and nut-brown braids. Her cherry lips were always wreathed with sunny smiles, and a pretty dimple was ever coquetting with the velvety cheek, where the color of the rose contended for mastery with that of the morning lily. Jeannette was a little beauty — simple, artless, child-like; with a spirit effervescent, light and joyous, and a heart bounding in love to all the world, capable of mingling its purest sympathies with the wail of suffering, as well as of responding to the sweet carols of the little birds that, singing their morning matins in the lilac at her window, awoke her from innocent dreams, to look on a world that, to her young soul, was as yet all beauty and melody and joy. Her nature was loving, dependent, confiding. Having no knowledge of the outward world, she was credulous without reserve; and her bright face, radiant with divine love and happiness, was the incarnation of innocence itself. Her mind was not so much on the order of the intellectual as of the angelic, and its chief characteristic was tender beauty, rather than dazzling brilliancy. Jeannette Evarts was a pure child of the heart; she never read much, or paled the freshening color of her cheek by poring over musty books, endeavoring to solve mysterious problems, or gather knowledge from profound sciences. The lessons she learned were the lessons of nature. She would sit for hours gazing on the silvery moon, or the myriads of twinkling lights in the blue expanse, and through these wondrous works would look still higher to the great Omnipotent Hand that formed them. Or again, at early morn she would

wander in the wide garden of flowers, her soul expanding with the love of nature, as she watched the bright god of day rising o'er the far-off mountains, and saw the glittering dew-drops grow to golden in the coming sunlight. She would listen to the chorus of the gay-plumaged songsters, and her own soft, warbling voice would respond in echo. She was the joy, the love, the life of her father's heart, and the very sunlight of his home. Her voice, so soft and musical, dispelled the cares that his business would bring to him, and her gentle words, so full of tenderness and love, drove the gloom from his brow when the probability of mercantile disaster forced itself upon him.

Henry Melton had not *quite* forgotten this little girl-beauty — the sweet friend of his early childhood's rambles. Often during his college-life, when his mind would busy itself with memories of the past, the bright happy face of little Jeannette would rise up before his vision, and again he could hear the merry peals of laughter, that were as music in his ears, in other days. Or again he could see the long lashes of the downcast eyes, as they used to look when he twined roses in the golden hair. He had not forgotten the little maiden's modest blush, as, when he had decked her as some fairy of the flowers, he took her soft little hand within his own, and, looking into the lustrous blue eyes, had called her his little "Queen of love and beauty." When he would awake from these pleasant dreamings, he would turn to the dull, dry books with a sigh, and "Oh, Jeannette! that I were only a child again, and could live over with you those bright days." The

visit of young Evarts called up many such memories vividly to his mind, and he fell to musing, and here are some of his thoughts:

"And I shall see thee again, Jeannette; bright little companion of my dreams, inspirer in my hours of lonely study. Thou did'st not forget the wild boy who chased with thee the golden butterfly o'er the lawn and flower beds, and who was never so happy as when watching your bright eyes sparkling with fun and merriment, or the golden hair dancing on zephyrs. Thou didst not forget the wild boy whose hands fashioned for thee the miniature ship and placed it on the silvery lake that thou might'st be pleased. In all the long years of absence thou did'st still remember the little associate of thy blessed childhood, who was never happier than when wandering by thy side, listening to the music of thy gentle voice — a music sweeter far, I know, than the vesper bird's voice, or the song of Paradise."

And now, while Henry Melton is dreaming, let us leave him to himself, and look in at "Myrtle Lawn." It was a most attractive and lovely residence, surrounded with the choicest beauties of Art and Nature, and furnished within with taste, elegance and richness. The floors were carpeted with the very finest materials, and the paintings that hung from the walls were by the most celebrated artists. A long veranda or portico extended the full front of the building, with each latticed end almost shut in by vines and honeysuckles. In front of the house a beautiful lawn, smooth as velvet, and shaded by the spreading branches of great tall

trees, extended a hundred yards or more. In the rear was a magnificent garden of vines and fruit trees, shrubbery and flowers, myrtle and evergreen. Beyond this was a beautiful little silvery lake or pond, and it was here that Jeannette loved best to wander, or sit on the mossy bank watching the wild flowers that grew upon the water's edge, as bending beneath the gentle breezes they would kiss the crystal waves.

In a spacious room, near an open window, which overlooked this scene of loveliness, sat Mr. Evarts in an easy rocking-chair. On the floor around him were newspapers, letters, etc., while on a small table at hand was an open box of cigars, and a small glass decanter half filled with wine. He was neatly dressed, and wore embroidered slippers. He was rather a portly gentleman, with a most kind and pleasant expression of face, and, though not an old looking man, he had evidently climbed to the top, and was going down on the other side of the hill of life. Apart from his position, dress and surroundings, one would have judged, from his appearance, that, while he was the soul of kindness and honor, he was not so full of energy and ambition as some men are, and was fond of ease and luxurious living. These characteristics had been so unmistakably impressed on his face that his expression might have been called "sensual," had it not been modified and softened by an indescribable look of holy affection, with which he occasionally regarded a beautiful young girl who, standing at an open window, gazed out upon the lovely scenery about her happy home.

For several minutes Jeannette Evarts had been silently standing there. Suddenly she turned to her father and exclaimed:

"Oh! dear papa, do come and look! It is so lovely and beautiful. The great red sun is just sinking behind the hills, and his departing rays light up the mountains of clouds in the west until they seem like great golden castles. I have looked and looked, papa, until I have peopled them with images of my own creation. I see the doors and windows of one mighty turreted castle, and the giant lord that is master there: and I see many others about him, and he does'nt move kindly among them. Oh, papa, it looks so grand; but it doesn't look so pretty and sweet as the flower garden, and the lake in the woods. And now the robin-redbreast in the great old poplar is warbling his farewell ditty to the dying day. Oh, papa! God must have been *so good* to have made this world so sweet and pretty for us all."

"You are a dear little enthusiast, Jeannette. Your young heart is as innocent as it is happy, and I pray that God may always bless you, my darling daughter."

Jeannette stood by her father's chair, and put her arm around his neck. The father resumed:

"I love to see my dear little girl admire the works of Nature, and be enthusiastic in her admiration of the grand and beautiful; but she must not forget that *all* is not beauty in the earth: that in the path of every individual lie stern duties, and oftentimes painful realities, sometimes great trials and griefs. It is our duty never to be altogether unprepared to meet them."

"Papa, what great sorrows or trials can ever come to us?"

"I hope none ever will come to you, my angel daughter," and in spite of him, two big tears rolled down his cheeks. The gentle girl tenderly wiped them away.

"There, my pet; you may go now. See, the evening shades are gathering, and your red-breast has hushed his twittering. Remember, in an hour from now young Melton will be here; and everybody says he is a talented lad; and Horace, you know, just told us he was even handsomer than three years ago. My little girl must keep a close watch over that little heart of hers, or else I may be supplanted."

A tell-tale blush was the only reply, and this was not observed in the thickening twilight.

CHAPTER III.

RENEWAL OF LOVE.

TWO months had passed since we left the happy little family at "Myrtle Lawn," and summer was deepening into autumn. The flowers were fading, and their falling leaves were strewn o'er the garden walks. The water-lilies no longer dipped their heads into the crystal lake, whose bright surface was now covered with the yellow leaves from the grand old poplar. It was on a beautiful morning in this lovely season, that Jeannette Evarts leaned on the arm of Henry Melton, as they wandered through the golden-hued woodland that skirted the quiet lake, in the rear of Myrtle Lawn.

For some minutes, they moved on in silence. She, the child of Nature, lulled as it were into a dreamy languor, by the soft, balmy skies above and the beauties around her; he, looking on the drooping lid and the rose-tinted cheek of the fair one at his side, his heart swelling with admiration, and fluttering with emotions — the tenderest never yet spoken — was silent, lest he should call her from the realms of her happy musings.

At last, they came to a picturesque and most lovely spot, where a little sparkling fountain gushed from beneath a great moss-covered rock, while its limpid waters made a soft, murmuring music, as it glided gently among the autumn leaves, and wended its way toward the little lake — its ocean. Above the rock, the

honeysuckle had twined its branches, forming a perfect arch of a golden hue, while here and there, a wild flower of the woodland, blooming on the dying breath of summer, lent its beauty to the scene, and its fragrance to the morning air. Birds chirped cheerily in the shrubbery and squirrels frisked in the tree-tops. It was altogether a pretty picture, and as it broke upon Jeannette Evarts, she suddenly aroused from her dreamy silence, and, turning to her companion with an outburst of enthusiasm, impulsively exclaimed:

"Oh! Mr. Melton, isn't it a delightful place! I could make this my home, and while my life away here on this green carpet of silky moss — with the golden archway above, the wild flowers blooming, and the birds singing above it, while the low ripple of this gentle streamlet, would lull me to sleep with its soft, gurgling music."

Then ashamed of this outburst of feeling, which found vent in the expression of such romantic ideas, she turned aside and hid her face, while the rose-color on her dimpled cheek deepened into scarlet.

"Come, Jeannette, you need not blush. You are a pure, little child, of noble impulse and generous emotions. Such enthusiasm is not unnatural, and truly, your idea of making this lovely place your home, is far from being absurd; for they tell me that the fairies live in such bowers, and if this be true, might be a fit place for you to dwell, for you are more lovely, Jeannette, than any fairy of my imagination, and your voice is sweeter than the voice of the birds whose singing you hear. But, come, be seated here, Jeannette, and let

this be our home for just a little while, for I have a story to tell to Jeannette, and Jeannette will listen to me — I know she will."

With a timid, blushing look, and a downcast eye, she was led, unresisting, to the mossy seat beneath the golden roof of Nature's handiwork.

"Not many summers ago, Jeannette," he began, "two happy children were wont often to meet at noon or evening, and play together on a wide, green lawn, that lay in front of a stately residence. Neither had ever known a care or sorrow, and their hearts were as light and joyous as the songs of the birds which, unheeded, sang in the branches above. Almost daily, would this little couple be together, scampering among the flower beds, or chasing the butterfly over the lawn; and when the twilight dews began to fall, this little boy would run down the gravel walk, and away to his father's house; and dream of the little girl, and wish for the return of morning, that he might meet her again. Time passed on, and their childish affection for each other grew with its passing. About the lad, there was nothing particularly striking; but the little girl looked like an escaped angel. She was fairer than the poet's dream of beauty, and the music of her voice was sweeter than the warble of the birds that sang her their tribute. Their happiness, however, could not last always; for now the lad must attend to his studies, and the little lady must have an instructress. Still they met sometimes, and it was always with smiles and kindly greetings. Still more years passed, and still they were the same warm friends. When, at last, the youth

was ready to go to a distant college, to be absent for years, and presented himself at the young lady's home to make his long adieus, she did not refuse him one good-by kiss, and a tear dimmed her eye as she gave it. The young man went away, and he studied diligently, for he had a proud, imperious father to please, and was himself not without ambition. He would get very tired and lonely at times, and then he would think of his former fair playmate, and her soft eyes would beam upon him with a tender lustre in his dreams. Sometimes he would sit and think of her for hours, and wonder to himself if he were remembered. Then recollecting that his little idol was growing up to woman's estate, and might probably forget him, and form new ties of affection before his return, he would sigh, and wish that the bright days had had no end. After long years of work and study, the college work grew to a close, and the youth returned to his home, having done his duty, and in a measure accomplished the purposes for which he went. Almost immediately he hastened to see her; but he can never tell the feelings that crowded upon him as he entered the familiar grounds and walked up the avenue that led through the wide lawn, whose every feature told its happy little story of the past. He knows that, as he entered the sacred house, he was moved by stronger emotions than he had ever known. And he knows that when he heard her footstep, as she came to greet him, he lost his self-possession to a degree unusual to him. He knows that, when she approached him, he was so transfixed with delightful astonishment, so enraptured by the

picture of her angelic beauty, that he could utter no word of response, when, as she placed her little hand in his, she said, in a soft, low tone that thrilled his very soul:

"'I am happy to see you again at our home.'

"From that moment, he felt that his destiny was in her hands. He loved her with all the fervor of an impassionate youth, that had known no other love. Weeks glided into months, and though he frequently saw her, though often her companion in walks and attendant to various places of amusement or pleasure, he did not dare to breathe the love that filled his soul. So sweet and innocent, so artless and guileless, so lovely and like an angel did she seem, that it looked like a wrong to speak to her of human feeling, and ask her sympathy in a human passion. That young man to-day, Jeannette, is sighing for the love of the only being whose love can make him happy. If she can grant the boon he asks, life and love, and hope, pride and ambition, will all gain a new impetus, and earth will be be to him an Eden. Jeannette, *my* Jeannette —bright, beautiful star of my hope and of my destiny—you know the picture. Have you an answer?"

She looked up into his face, smiling through her tears, and while her own was irradiated with innocent love and unconcealed happiness, placed her soft, little hand in his, and nestled her head on his bosom. Just then, a pretty bird, in a woodbine near, sang his love-song in a low, sweet tone of pathos and melody.

Let us drop the curtain, and turn our attention for awhile to other characters, who will figure in this, our humble history.

CHAPTER IV.

LEONINE LAVINE.

"NORA, you know that I love you: that I have made an idol of you, and that you are dearer to me than every tie and every hope on earth beside. Since loving you as I have done, to lose you, darling, would be to make my heart a desert, and my life a failure. You have promised to be my bride; you have promised that you would love me always. Upon this, I have staked my all. If aught should come between us, if any accursed evil should part us, Nora, hope would die within me, never to revive, and joy be a thing unknown to me thenceforth forever. More than all other living, earthly beings, *you* are the guardian of my destiny. Now, in view of this, I ask you, have I not a right to insist that you be governed by my wishes, in a matter of this sort? I know that you concede me the right, and now, once more, I *insist* that you see this man MacKenzie no more."

Horace Evarts spoke with earnestness and decision; but he grew nervous and excited, as his companion replied:

"Can it be, dear Horace, that *you* are jealous? Can you not trust me? Mr. MacKenzie does not come to me as a lover, but only as a friend; and as such, he has a claim, not only to my sympathy, but most positively to my gratitude. To my sympathies, because he

fought side by side with the father whose memory I adore — fought with him in a cause which, though lost, was dearer, to one of them, at least, than his life. To my gratitude, for his timely assistance in rescuing me from the perilous position which my thoughtless indiscretion had placed me, and for which I was about to pay the penalty, probably with my life. Mr. MacKenzie, it is true, has been very attentive to me ever since the unfortunate occurrence; but he has never discovered to me any other emotions than those of the purest, most disinterested friendship.

"You know that I love you, dear Horace; and that upon this love I, too, have staked *my all*. You know that your happiness is mine. You know that I will be your wife. You know that I ask no higher or holier or happier lot in life. You know that it will be bliss to me to lean upon you — to take shelter in your love from the storms of life; to share my joys with you, and to bless you, if my holiest love can bless you. But, dear Horace, you will pardon me, when I say that I am inclined to think your suspicions in regard to Mr. MacKenzie, do him great injustice; and let me say that unless you recall your commands, my position will be embarrassing. How can I refuse to see him, under the peculiar circumstances?"

"Nora, your defense of this man drives me almost to madness. I have no 'suspicions' in the matter. I have ascertained what I know to be facts concerning this man, not only from a careful observation of his conduct, but by a searching inquiry, instituted for my satisfaction and your good; and since you will force

me to speak, I will out with it. I know MacKenzie to be a *gambler and a villain*—a hanger-on to all the fashionable thieving hells that infest the country, from Maine to California. He is a sharp fellow; has travelled much, read a good deal, is well informed, and understands every phase and feature of man's nature and character. He can adapt himself with wonderful skill and quickness, to any circumstances or conditions, and can read human nature and its emotions, as expressed in the face, as you can read an open book. This power, together with his easy grace and polished manners, his smooth tongue and fine appearance, has been the instrument by which he has corrupted innocence, and accomplished all manner of nefarious designs."

The speaker anxiously and attentively regarded the young girl before him, who appeared one moment absorbed, and then said:

"Permit me to ask you one question, dear Horace. Are you quite sure that the party from whom you got your information, was not an enemy to Mr. MacKenzie, and, wishing to revenge himself for some fancied evil, did not purposely misrepresent his character, and his mode of life?"

"I know that the sources of my information are perfectly trustworthy; and I will vouch for the truth of what I have told you. I repeat, that MacKenzie is an unscrupulous villain, and I know that he hates me from his very soul, for the love you bear me. Do you remember the evening I met you down on the suburban walk, leaning on his arm? He saw that I was hurt

and mortified; and, though I am no physiognomist, I could easily detect, beneath the bland smile of his cordial greeting, the malignant triumph he felt at my embarrassment. We are happy now, my Nora—happy in each other's love, and we will be even still happier, dearest. But somehow, I even tremble at the bare mention of this man's name. It is not that I doubt you, little darling, for I know that you are as good, as pure and as innocent as virtue itself; but there seems to be an indefinable sensation of dread, and I feel that there is a slimy reptile creeping with his poisonous sting into our happy Eden."

"Enough, dear Horace. You have nothing to fear. I shall immediately forbid him my presence. But how shall this be done? Will he not, as my father's friend and comrade in battle, and the rescuer, probably, of my own life, expect some courtesy and kindness at my hands?"

Horace Evarts looked upon his betrothed with some expression of compassion, but with feelings of ineffable tenderness, as he replied:

"Poor little innocent credulity? Why, Nora, do you believe everything the base hypocrite tells you? His professions of sympathy and friendship, are to cloak the vilest designs. I doubt whether the reptile was ever even on the soil of Louisiana, and I am almost sure he never smelt the smoke of battle; and even should he have that much to his credit, the chances are, as nine to ten, he was enlisted in the cause against which your honored and lamented father fought so nobly. This MacKenzie has heard of your father;

knew that he was a gallant officer, under that old hero, General Taylor; heard of the manner of his heroic death; and, learning of the profound reverence and holy affection with which you cherished the memory of the martyred one, knew the key note of your sympathy."

"I do not wish to hear more. I will do as you wish, and that without delay. But suppose after I forbid him my presence, he should persist in seeing me, and come to me unawares?"

The young man's eyes fairly blazed with excitement, and clenching his hands, he exclaimed:

"Then, by the gods! I will pollute the earth with his heart's vile blood? When he comes, you just bid him once — only *once*, Nora — 'leave you.' Tell him that *I* have asked and required it at your hands; and if ever he dares to breathe your name with his foul lips, if ever he dares to raise his eyes to yours, even in token of recognition again, let me know it, and the vengeance of heaven will overtake the cursed wretch sooner than he now imagines."

The young girl raised her eyes pleadingly to those of her lover, and taking both his hands within her own, said in a voice replete with tenderness:

"Oh, Horace, do not worry yourself any longer with thoughts of this man. Whoever or whatever he may be, I will trust him no more. Let not your deep love for me, nor your excited feelings, conjure up evils for the future; but let us love and confide in each other, as we have done in the past, and no dark shadows will ever come over the brightness of our dreams, but all will be love and happiness."

"You are my angel, Nora, and I love you with all my heart and soul." And Horace Evarts folded the the maiden in his arms, and kissed her ruby lips.

* * * * * *

We beg the forbearance of the reader, and ask him for just a little while, to go back with us to a time far remote.

About forty years prior to the period at which our history begins, there lived, in a town near the city of Guanaxuato, about two hundred miles north-west from the capital of Mexico, a wealthy and influential young Creole, by name, Lavine. Like a large majority of his class, he possessed fine natural talents, and a great desire, as well as facility, for acquiring knowledge. He was extremely mild and courteous in his manners, kind and benevolent towards his neighbors, and hospitable to strangers.

Lavine, at twenty, found himself thirsting after wisdom, with a taste for all polite literature, the arts and the sciences. In the threatening political aspect of his own country, he resolved on visiting Europe, partly for the purpose of curiosity and pleasure, but chiefly because it afforded superior advantages for the completion of his education. He studied the sciences in the most celebrated halls of learning, and his talents and his moral worth and his wealth, gained him easy access to the highest circles of European life.

At the Court of Madrid, he met with the beautiful daughter of a Spanish nobleman; and, struck with her exceeding beauty, impressed with her amiable mental traits, and captivated by her artless innocence, he paid

her his address, proposed for her hand in marriage, and was accepted. She must have loved him devotedly, for she married him in direct opposition to the expressed wishes of all her friends, and in the face of the abandonment of large expectations.

Lavine took his young bride to his home in Mexico; and, though the Creole's mansion was not so dazzling as the Spanish palace, it was yet brilliant enough, and it was resplendent with the light of love, which shed a warmth and lustre that the glitter of gold and gems could never do. For several years, this happy couple, surrounded by wealth and all the luxuries and comforts that it could purchase, their hearts beating with but one pulse, lived on in peace and bliss, without a single shadow to dim the brightness and beauty of their skies. In the meantime, there were born to them two handsome boys, and the proud father felt that nothing was wanting—his cup of joy was full.

Human happiness, however, never continues long uninterrupted, and doubtless it is wisely so ordained. Man was placed here to live for another life, and were his joys *always* perfect, he would, from the very nature of his being, forget the source from which his blessings flowed. The beautiful land of Mexico had long been periodically convulsed in the throes of revolution, and about this time, one of these bloody paroxysms shook the land. Lavine, full of chivalry, with an intense love of liberty, and a hatred of oppression, linked his fate and his fortunes with an insurgent band, who conceived the idea that they were to put down a cruel tyranny, and establish a purer government. Some thousand

men rose in arms, headed by one of the most renowned men of the land, and Lavine followed, as one of his lieutenants.

It is not our province, nor is it our pleasure, to follow the fortunes of the revolutionists. It is enough to say, that in a few months the whole band were dispersed or destroyed. The General and his Lieutenant, with many of their followers, were made prisoners; fifty of them were executed on the field of action, and ten more, after hearing the decree for the confiscation of their estates, and the banishment of their families, were put to death a month later. Among these latter were the General, and his Lieutenant, Lavine.

The young widow Lavine, after the tragic end of her husband, and the cruel decree of the Mexican authorities, with a broken heart and a spirit crushed by the terrible blow, gathered together all the money and treasures she could, and quit the land of her husband's birth. Knowing that he had relatives in the State of Louisiana, she went thither, and fixed her abode in the city of New Orleans. Notwithstanding the fact that all her lands had been confiscated in Mexico, she still possessed considerable means, and getting counsel from friends she found in her new home, managed her affairs well, conducted the education of her two sons judiciously and successfully, and lived to see them both nearly of age, when she died, honored and lamented, in the year 1853.

Very soon thereafter, the elder son became of age, and went to Baltimore, in Maryland, where he embarked in business. The younger, then nineteen,

entered a college in the city of Philadelphia, for the purpose of learning the science of medicine. Leonine Lavine was hot-blooded, chivalrous and handsome; and, more than this, he was talented. He graduated with credit, in the usual time, and duly received his diploma. Before returning to New Orleans, he accepted an invitation to spend a month or two with his brother, in Baltimore. While making that visit, in the spring of 1856, young Leonine met the beautiful and accomplished daughter of a prominent officer of the United States navy. By her beauty and acquirements, he was attracted to her. But it was the loveliness of her character, and the simplicity and purity of her life and tastes, that *won* him. He paid her all manner of devoted attention, and after a courtship of a month or two, she promised to be his wife. During the ensuing autumn they were married, and Dr. Lavine returned with his bride to his home in Louisiana.

In a short time, he found himself well established in an extended and lucrative practice. He was not rich, but there was no spectre of poverty haunting him, and his home was supplied with every convenience and comfort. He was passionately fond of his young wife, and she was most devotedly attached to him. For several years their young lives flowed smoothly and tranquilly, and no sorrow came over their way. During this time, the young wife's heart was gladdened and the husband's pride elated, by the entrance into their sunny home of a sweet little child. Though the father was at first somewhat troubled that the little visitant was not a boy, who, in the years to come,

might add a lustre to his name, he concealed all trace of his feelings from the gentle creature who leaned on him for love and strength; and as time wore on, he forgot altogether his first ungrateful emotion, and with little Nora clinging around his knees and lisping his name, he felt indeed that he could not be more blessed.

* * * * * *

Then drew near the beginning of that dire epoch in our national history, the contemplation of which, even at this late day, causes the soul to shudder. For many years the storm had been brewing. The fires of an "irrepressible conflict," fanned and fed by a score of fire-eating demagogues of the South, and a few cold-hearted, ungodly men of the North; fanned and fed by sectional rivalries, jealousies and hatreds — hatreds which were even shared in by the great churches of the two divisions; fanned and fed by the sinful excesses and riotous living of the people, and by the tendency of the times towards that condition of things which immediately preceded the most bloody and agonizing revolution that ever swept over beautiful France — were about to light into a blaze that should startle the world.

The hot, southern, Creole blood that coursed the veins of Leonine Lavine, would not suffer him to be still; nor would his vehement, restless, impulsive nature permit him to be content with a position which guaranteed him almost perfect personal safety. Instead of acting in that sphere where lay his power of doing the greatest good, he threw his physic to the wind, and placing himself at the head of a hundred mounted

young men, hardly less daring and impulsive than himself, rushed impetuously to the front, and sought that part of the field where the danger was greatest. It was not many months before his dash and gallantry attracted attention, and he was placed at the head of a cavalry regiment. The months counted about a year, and Lavine and his command won a fame in the South and West, coequal with that of Mosby, in the mountains and valleys of Virginia.

During all this time, the gallant Colonel saw his young wife and infant girl only twice. New Orleans fell into the hands of the Federal authority. Butler's infamous order electrified with horror and disgust the whole Southern heart. It came to Lavine, and driven almost to frenzy, he determined to see his wife and child, and take steps to have them removed to a place of greater safety and quiet. After much danger and difficulty, he succeeded in getting within the limits; spent a week of undisturbed happiness with his beloved wife and darling little girl; and after communicating with his brother in Baltimore, and arranging for him to come immediately to New Orleans and carry his family back with him, made his preparations to rejoin his regiment.

The parting between him and his young wife and child, was tender and touching in the extreme; but he felt that they were safe from all harm and danger, and this assurance relieved his mind of its greatest burden. As for his own perilous situation, he thought little. His sanguine, brave nature saw nothing but success ahead. It whispered to him of a time not far distant,

when peace would be restored, and the cause for which he fought, be proudly victorious. He had happy visions of a most blissful reunion with his darling loved ones, of a career of usefulness and happiness, of long years of joy and love. Oh, that the siren's voice had proved prophetic! Oh, pity! that the brave, noble, loving young heart was so soon to have its pulses stilled in death! Pity, oh, sad pity! that the fond, tender heart of the beautiful, young wife was so soon to be torn and lacerated! Pity, oh, pity! that despair was so soon to take the place of hope — that the prayer of love was to be hushed in the wail of anguish!

Col. Lavine never succeeded in getting back through the lines. He was taken, tried hurriedly and irregularly by Court Martial, as a spy, and having had some indiscreet letters and papers found on his person, from parties in New Orleans, to their friends in Col. Lavine's regiment, he was condemned, and shot to death without a day's delay. No braver or nobler heart, in all those years of murder and ruin, shed its blood on the altar of country, than was shed that day. Thus died Colonel Leonine Lavine, the father of the "Nora" of our story, who was the betrothed of Horace Evarts.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

"I REPEAT, Henry, that this is not only unexpected, but very unpleasant news to me. You might at least have consulted me before making any such rash engagements."

"You persist, father, in calling it a *rash* engagement. I tell you that my attachment for Jeannette Evarts is the growth of years. It began when we were mere children, and as our years advanced it ripened into a profound affection. During my long stay at college she was often present with me, and the melody of her voice was the music of my dreams. The memory of her sweet face shed a blessed influence o'er my way, and when the tempter would allure me from the paths of virtue to the scenes of dissipation, the recollections of my childhood's days with little Jeannette, would rise up before me with their innocent joys, and point me to a higher happiness, and inspire me with the noblest aspirations. It never once occurred to me that you would refuse your sanction to my choice. I did not consult you, because I did not think it was necessary. I flattered myself that you would be pleased with the alliance, for I know that Mr. Evarts was one of your earliest and dearest friends. You cannot object, I am sure to his family, for it is equal in point of social position, if not in wealth, to our own; and

even if it were otherwise, I could not now retrace my steps."

"You do not understand me, my son. I do not mean to say that I will never *consent* to your marriage with Miss Evarts, for it is possible that I may be reconciled to it, if, after your law studies are completed, you still continue to think that your happiness will depend upon the connection. It is true, as you observed, that Mr. Evarts and myself have been warm friends for very many years; and I know of no sweeter and more amiable little girl than his daughter. She is evidently the very embodiment of artlessness and innocence; but without any brilliancy of intellect would not these qualities become tiresome and insipid to an aspiring and ambitious mind? Mr. Evarts also occupies a station in society in no wise inferior to my own; and it is possible his wealth may be nearly equal; though I notice of late years he gives little or no attention to his affairs, and I fear that his fondness for wine is rapidly increasing with his age. Evarts' first wife was a magnificent woman, and from one of the first families in Virginia. His second wife, the mother of Jeannette and Horace, lives over again in the form, face and character of her daughter. Evarts met her accidentally, and he, being of rather an impulsive and romantic disposition, with less pride than a man in his walk in life ought to possess, married her; though she was poor, unknown in the first circles of society, and doubtless could not trace her family two generations back."

"You surely do not mean to imply, father, that there is anything discreditable in this to Jeannette. The

want of ancestral honors could be no reproach even to her mother. There is as much true worth, perhaps more, to be found in the middle classes of society as in the highest order; and while I would not go beneath me to search for it, yet had I been situated as Mr. Evarts was, and happened on a beautiful gem, I should have *stooped* — if you prefer the word — to gather; nor would I have been deterred by my false notions of pride and aristocracy."

"We will not speak of this at present. You are young, Henry, and you are governed now less by reason and sober judgment than by impulse and a generosity natural to your age. Far be it from me to reflect on Mr. Evarts, or any member of his family. I am their friend, and the expression of any unkind sentiment would be indeed foreign to my feelings. I repeat, that I may not oppose your marriage with Miss Evarts, if, after long deliberation and calm reflection, you still think the union essential to your happiness. I love you much, my son; but my ambition is only second to my affection. It has been the only dream I have cherished since your blessed mother was taken from me. When I looked in your eyes, as you sat on my knee, a little curly-haired child, I began my buildings for you. Ever since, to see you at some future time occupying one of the highest position that this country can offer, honored throughout the land, has been the one great hope and aim of my existence, the one great study of my life and the lever of all my efforts. With your fortune and your talents, your fine appearance and polished education, you can, by a proper course of con-

duct, marry almost any woman in this great nation. I had hoped to have formed for you a far more desirable alliance, and thus further and facilitate my aims. There is Miss Ellen Glennmore, the beautiful, talented and accomplished daughter of one of the very first men in this country. He is honored every where, and his influence is felt all over this broad land. He has been a spendthrift, however, and his pecuniary affairs are in a very unsettled and unsatisfactory condition. Knowing my immense wealth, and your mental and moral worth, I have no doubt, in fact, I have the tacit but positive assurance, he would listen favorably to any proposals from me, and would willingly give you the hand of his daughter in marriage. Were this alliance formed, you could, with your money and your merits and with his almost unlimited influence, rise to any position to which your aspirations would point."

"Father, I too have ambition. It is one of my highest purposes to climb to an honorable eminence, and stand above the common masses of mankind. I long to reflect credit and lustre on our name; but it must be done, if done at all, by honest effort, strict integrity, mental and moral worth, rather than by intrigue. And I would not to-day turn from the gentle Jeannette, and pronounce false vows to another, to be the greatest potentate of earth."

"I would not have you pronounce false vows, my son. Being in the first flush of youth your idea of love is romantic; and the pictures your imagination paints of sentimental love and married life are too highly colored, and overwrought. As you grow older

and mingle more with the world you will have less of the *couleur de rose* in your notions of love matters, and will see that it were better to mix a little of the platonic and politic with the passionate. It will not be long before you will have to be absent several months to complete your law studies. After a short absence and close application to books, you will no doubt forget this boyish dream, and will be glad enough to accept the hand of the brilliant and lovely Miss Glennmore."

"If you hope that my feelings, father, for dear Jeannette will ever change, you will certainly be sadly disappointed. I feel it my duty to you and to myself to make known my sentiments and my convictions; and with all deference for your opinions, and with the most profound respect for your feelings, my father, I tell you now and forever that, knowing Jeannette Evarts as I know her, and loving Jeannette Evarts as I love her, *I would rather marry her in a sewing-house in New York, than wed the proudest daughter of the highest nobleman in all England, even though her brow was decked with a jewelled diadem.*"

"Boy, you are out of your head. You know not what you say. I will not listen to such a silly tirade. We will talk no more of this matter at present. Please ring and order Merriman out with my horses. I must ride into the city."

In a short time the old merchant-prince was seated in his velvet-cushioned carriage, and the door was about to be closed when his son stepped up to bid him good day, and said:

"If my language was not respectful to you, my

father, or if I manifested any spirit of wanton rebellion against your wishes, I trust you will forgive me. I have always tried to be obedient, and it has been my study to please you. I will ever do so, provided I do not compromise my integrity or the happiness of one who is dearer to me than my life."

The father and son shook hands and parted for the day.

CHAPTER VI.

A DARK REVELATION.

MRS. COL. LAVINE never returned to New Orleans. She and Nora, her little daughter, continued to live with the brother of her dead hero husband until the close of the war, when he, Eugene Lavine, went South; and gathering up all the remnants of the effects of the lamented one, returned to his home in Baltimore. At her request he bought for her a sweet little cottage in a most picturesque location, just beyond the outskirts of the town, in which resided already some of the principal characters who have figured thus far in our little history. Thither, very soon after, she and her little girl — then a beautiful child of seven or eight summers — moved.

If any thing could have softened the sorrow, if anything could have mitigated the anguish which the young widow felt at the continually recurring memory of the sad fate of her noble and loved lost one, the winning graces, the perfect beauty, the tender love of this dear little girl would have done it. If any home on earth could have been as beautiful to the young widow's heart as that dear home which she was forced some years before to abandon, that never to be forgotten home, in which, with the lost idol, she had passed her young love's dream, the sweet home she now occupied would have been. If the affectionate and compas-

sionate attention, and the devoted sympathy and kindness of any living being could have proved an antidote for the poison of her grief, it would have been furnished in the unvarying kindness and considerate attention of the surviving brother of her dead hero. All these combined blunted the sting of her grief, but nothing would ever quite remove it. She also had an additional cause of mourning. Her father, (who as we have shown, was an officer in the United States Navy, when she married a few years previous to the beginning of the great internecine struggle) received a wound while gallantly doing his duty in a naval engagement with Confederate forces, and died in Baltimore not long before the close of the war. He left a merely nominal estate, which in all consisted of only two or three thousand dollars. This amount, as a matter of course, was inherited by Mrs. Col. Lavine, as she was an only child.

Eugene Lavine did not continue many years in Baltimore after he had seen his sister-in-law pleasantly established in her cottage home, and so arranged her financial matters that there was scarce a possibility of her ever coming to want. Finding the enterprise in which he had embarked in that city not as prosperous as he had anticipated, and not promising any immediate lucrative results, he resolved to return to Louisiana. He had not been in New Orleans very long when he wrote to his sister-in-law, stating that "in view of the great social and political changes which had occurred in Mexico since his father's tragic end and the banishment of his mother and her children,

and in consideration of some inviting prospects which had been lately held out to him by friends there, he should soon leave New Orleans for the old home of his birth, and would probably permanently establish himself there."

So, Mrs. Lavine and little Nora were left quite alone in the world. In the very nature of things, however, it was impossible that she should continue miserable. Her home was all that her heart could wish. The loveliness of her dear little daughter was being enhanced by the passing time; and, above all, her own soul was expanding under the influence of that divine religion which shows to its believers light and hope, when to others there might be nought but despair. The young widow could never forget Leonine Lavine. From her heart would never be erased the memory of his noble form, his faithful love, and his tender devotion; but she thought of him now, not with a painful, but a holy sorrow. Her life was growing happy in its serenity and holiness.

Elmwood afforded a pretty picture with its flower-embosomed cottage, its graceful elms, and neat shrubbery; its lemon, orange and oleander trees; its palms and agaves; its cycads and chrysanthemums. From the little white gate by the arbor of honeysuckles a shining pebble way led to the cottage entrance. There were also, close by, some lovely promenade grounds, and a romantic walk leading towards a stream of water that flowed through a small forest of tall maples, oaks, and hickory. Among the undergrowth of this grove there were interspersed endless varieties of clustering

vines, and quantities of wild flowers. It was down by this wood, some two years prior to the period at which our story begun, and four years after peace had settled upon the land, that Horace Evarts, in one of his boyhood's rambles, first met little Nora Lavine.

She was then only twelve years of age, he was some three years her senior. After a little lapse of time they managed to meet frequently, until their acquaintance, so romantically formed, ripened into a warm friendship; and as young Evarts became an almost daily visitor at Mrs. Lavine's beautiful cottage, this friendship developed a warmer feeling. The happy young couple never troubled themselves to analyze the sympathy that was binding them together, and no word of love was spoken between them; but it is none the less true that, when Horace was sent off by his father to college, to be a year or two absent, he sorrowed more at parting with Nora Lavine than he did at leaving his gentle sister: and just so true it is that Nora's eyes were dimmed with tears as she bade him good-by, and her strolls were not half so frequent after he left. Time rolled on, and months hurried by until more than enough to make a year had passed, when Horace Evarts came back. He delayed not long in going to Elmwood cottage; and Nora's happy face, grown still more beautiful in the early dawn of womanhood, brightened as he came. Whether he met with success in the renewal of his suit, the reader already knows.

At the same hour that his conversation with Nora was going on there were seated in a room in a hotel in Baltimore, two gaudily-attired men, each apparently

about thirty-two or three years of age. One wore a massive gold ring with a showy setting, the other a heavy pin in his shirt-front, studded with diamonds. A box of cigars, and several half-emptied decanters were on a table before them, and both looked as if they had been drinking freely. From the conversation that passed between them, a more correct estimate of their qualities and character can be arrived at than from any regular delineation.

"MacKenzie, let us replenish: — there! And now I drink the health of the little Venus, whom I saw the other evening leaning so confidingly on your arm, as you promenaded the walk leading to that pretty white cottage on the suburbs of ——. And while I drink to her happiness, I want you to tell me who she is, and what fortunate chance threw her in your way."

"Ah, Charlie! she is a perfect gem, a real unsophisticated little innocent. She knows no more about the world than a new-born babe. She is quite young, just blooming into womanhood, and is as fresh and effervescent as this sparkling wine. The soft dark eyes beam with a languid lustre, and the cherry lips seem always asking for a kiss. Don't you think her a prize worth winning? And now, honestly, Charlie, what would you give for my chance?"

"MacKenzie, don't tantalize me. What would I give? Why, my winnings for the next three months. But where is her father that he allows such freedom from a stranger?"

"Her father! Why, my dear fellow, my knowledge of him is my key to her sympathy. Her father was

colonel of that famous Confederate regiment of cavalry from Louisiana, which played such havoc with our forces out in the southwest during the rebellion. He had been married only a few years previous to the war, and lived in New Orleans. He left his wife and little daughter there when he went into the rebel army; and there they were when New Orleans fell into the hands of our forces. Soon thereafter, when the Southern heart was bursting with impotent rage over the order of Butler about the New Orleans women, this hot-headed, dare-devil Creole Colonel conceived the precious idea of coming through the lines into the city with the view of removing his wife and child. He came. He was too well known, and too dangerous, ever to be allowed to get back to his cursed band of guerillas. Through the treachery of one of his supposed friends, sealed letters, containing what purported to be damaging information and treasonable utterances, were given him to be taken back to his regiment, and when he was captured in trying to get back, those papers, found on his person, helped to convict him of being a spy. He lived but one hour after his conviction. I had an elder brother — killed subsequently — who was an officer in our army, who was one of the few officers who sat on the court that tried him. I myself was in New Orleans at the time, and heard from my brother's own lips the manner of his death. Six men only were appointed to execute him, and at the order of the officer in charge he marched boldly out and took his stand, ten paces in their front. When they offered to bandage his eyes, he bade them, authoritatively, to desist, saying in a

tone of fearless defiance: 'I want to look at the cowards when they shoot an unarmed man, whose only crime is an honest effort to free his country of a villainous oppression, and to remove his wife and child from a city under a control so obnoxious.' He stood uncovered, and with his black locks dancing in the breeze, a smile of triumphant scorn curling his lip, and his dark eye beaming a cold, stern defiance, he looked the picture of heroic beauty in his unbending, unyielding stubborness. The six soldiers showed that they hated to shoot him; and when the order was given, 'ready, aim,' the eyes of the riflemen, and those of the condemned met; and, what is wonderful to be told — *the muzzles of six rifles dropped to the ground.* My brother swore to me that he never witnessed anything to equal it, and that he never saw such a look of derision and exultation as that man's face exhibited. Again the command was given, 'ready, aim, fire.' The only words that ever escaped him were 'my wife, my child.'"

The speaker's companion listened attentively during this recital, and when it was finished, said: "It was not right to kill such a man. He should have been spared."

"You know not what you say," returned the other, "he was a traitor; and, though you know I am no patriot, and care most for the country where I can win the most money, still I gloried in the death of this stubborn Creole."

"With such feelings towards the father," asked the one called Charlie, "how can you hope to interest the girl in your favor?"

"Do you suppose that I am fool enough to express such sentiments in her hearing? No indeed. She believes that I fought in the same cause and on the same fields with her father, and that I had a brother who met a fate not very unlike his. She cherishes her father's memory as something sacred, and her eyes will often fill with tears at the sound of his name. Believing all that I ever told her, she feels a very natural sympathy for me, and it is in this manner that I work on her feelings."

"But, MacKenzie, you have not yet told me her name, and, what is more important, how you found her out and became acquainted with her?"

"Your first question is easily answered. Her name is Nora, this is enough. As to the other part of your question it will take me a longer time to satisfy you. Listen and you shall have it. Before I proceed, however, let us fill up again, for I am getting very dry."

"Good enough; and now that we are ready, I'll give you a toast. So here goes to you and your pretty friend; a blissful combination, which might signify an early yield and a rich harvest. How do you like *that*, old boy?"

"Capital! the harvest would be rich enough, for the fruit is luscious, but about the yield, I am afraid it will not be so early as I might wish. I have a delicate part to play, and the girl can be firm when she will; besides there is a lover in the way, who is in real earnest, and to whom she has pledged her hand in marriage. He suspects me. I can see it in him; and I don't like his looks much. He is evidently a kind-hearted, easy sort

of a fellow, but he's got the devil behind it all, and I wouldn't like to trust him if he should get stirred up much. However, I'm digressing. You wanted to know how I became acquainted with her. Well, I happened to be down in the village where she lives, about six or eight weeks ago on a little *professional* business: in other words to see and form the acquaintance of a dashing young Mississippian, who came up here to receive a sum of money that had been left him by a recently deceased relative. You know I only wanted to take him around the city and show him its sights, so that his stay in this section might be as pleasant as possible. When I got to the village I learned that the fast young gentleman had just gone into the country to visit some relations, and would not be back for three or four days. Having no pressing business here or elsewhere, and having a pretty full stock of funds in hand, I concluded to spend the few days in the village until his return. I had been lounging about my hotel, nearly all of the second day after my arrival, and was beginning to grow weary of the dullness and monotony of the place, when it occurred to me that a stroll through the village and around its suburbs might afford some recreation. So, inviting a resident of the place with whom I had been conversing (a good silly sort of a fellow) to drink wine with me, and puffing him up a little, I got into his favor so far that when I proposed a walk he readily assented, and seemed flattered with the privilege of accompaning me. We rambled about for an hour or so, and was on the point of returning, when I beheld a beautiful young girl

before us, leaning on the arm of a tall, handsome lad. We were moving very slowly, and I had a good opportunity of noticing all that passed, and studying the girl's face. I saw in a moment that she was perfectly artless and innocent, and withal a model Hebe in appearance. As we met, she raised her eyes and saw that I was gazing full upon her with looks of intense admiration. In a second her eyes fell beneath my ardent gaze, and a crimson blush mounted her face. They passed on, and in an indifferent manner, I interrogated my companion about the couple we had just seen. He informed me that the young lady's name was Nora; explained who her father had been; said that she appeared but little in society, and was seldom seen except in her walks, and that these were mainly confined to the grove of maples and elms near the pretty cottage, where she and her mother lived alone. That the young man who was with her, was the son of a wealthy merchant of the place, who carried on his business in Baltimore, and that his name was Evarts. 'And is this young man her constant attendant in her walks,' I asked. 'Oh, no!' he replied, 'but he is the favored suitor for her hand, and is often with her, though she is sometimes seen quite alone in that wood yonder, or down by the cliff, or where the flowers and vines grow on the stream through there.' This was, as you imagine all I wanted to hear, and I resolved that after I disposed of the other affair, to return and accidentally meet this pretty rambler, and trust to fortune for an introduction. That fortune proved most propitious, as you will directly see. But let us return to my

Mississippi friend. The next day was the one on which he was to come back. Come he did in due time. I played my part well, and in two days had worked myself so cleverly into his good graces, that he agreed to stop a day or two with me in the city."

"Of course you did not let him get off safely with all his legacy?"

"No indeed; but I had my nerves really shocked by the sad termination of the affair. The poor fellow lost every dollar he had, except some hundred or two, and he was so maddened with his folly and misfortunes, that he went into a great drunken spree, and at the end of a fortnight was dead, from 'mania a potu.'"

"Too bad; what was the amount of his losses?"

"Some eight thousand dollars, I believe."

"A pretty good haul, but I would not be in your boots for your share of the amount."

"You are a fool and a coward, Charlie; but hand over that fresh bottle, and let us drink again the health of my little heroine."

"I'm drunk now, nevertheless here's her health, and may her loveliness never be wasted on one who has not the delicacy to appreciate it."

MacKenzie cast a searching look on his companion, for his language was ambiguous, but there was nothing in his face to excite his anger or suspicions, and MacKenzie resumed:

"After the Mississippi affair was settled I returned to the village. For several days did I seek in vain to get another glimpse of my pretty Nora. In vain did I frequent the neighborhood of her accustomed walk,

when one evening, as was my wont, I wandered down towards the grove near which I had met her. It was a most beautiful and delightful evening, and as little as I care about the inanimate beauties of nature, I felt impressed by the peculiar loveliness of the landscape. After wandering about a while I grew tired; and, throwing myself on a little green mound near the gurgling stream, was soon lost to myself. I did not remain long, however, in this mental lethargy; for soon I heard a low, sweet musical voice trembling on the quiet summer air, and scarcely raising myself, lest I should be discovered, I peered through the vines and bushes, and lo! I beheld the little beauty, fairer than when I first met her. She was slowly moving on towards the stream, and seemed intent on gathering flowers. These she carried in her little apron, until at last she sat down on a mossy bank, beneath a large shade tree, and busied herself weaving a garland. I watched her for several minutes, and was on the eve of discovering myself to her, when, as if moved by some sudden impulse, she arose and hastened towards the bank of the stream, where grew some beautiful woodbines. The flowers, however, hung over the water's edge, and it was dangerous to reach for them. She did not seem to see or regard the danger; for, catching hold of a branch, she leaned forward and stretched forth her hand to grasp them. Her hand was almost upon them when the vine she clung to for support gave way, and in a moment more she was struggling with the current. You know, Charlie, the water is my element. I rushed forward, plunged in, and grasping her

in my arms, in a minute had the frightened fawn safe on the bank."

"By the ace of hearts, MacKenzie, you are a lucky fellow. You could not have had a more auspicious introduction."

"Certainly not. As soon as she sufficiently recovered from her fright, we moved off for her abode, which was less than half a mile away. We exchanged few words during our brief walk. When I bade her good evening at the little gate of her cottage yard, she begged that I would call on her the following morning, that her mother and herself might express their thanks for my timely assistance. I told her that I esteemed myself most fortunate in that I had been the means of serving her; and that, while I did not deserve or want any thanks, I should be most happy with her permission to call in the morning to assure myself she suffered no indisposition from her embarrassing accident. Of course I called, and I found her looking as bright as a rose and as tempting as a ripe peach. Ever since I have been admitted as a friend; and, though I have to be very careful, and have a nice part to play, I am making progress, and think I have her entire confidence, which you know, my boy, is half the battle."

Let us turn from this faithfully delineated, but none the less disgusting, picture of moral depravity and villainy. We have lingered too long already, it may be, in its contemplation, but painful as it has been, our little history would have been incomplete without it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

ONE evening, soon after the conversation just related, a happy party of young people had gathered at Myrtle Lawn. It had been its owner's custom for many years, to celebrate each birthday anniversary by a splendid entertainment, and this was one of these occasions. All the first-class young people of the village were there, besides some from the neighborhood, and not a few from Baltimore.

Everything was in princely style and elegance, and corresponded with the wealth and liberality of the generous-minded host. The front avenue, leading from the entrance of the building to the highway, was beautifully illuminated, while the pearly shells and tiny white rocks in the way, reflecting the rays of many lights, glittered like twinkling stars. From the ceilings of the halls, magnificent chandeliers were suspended, which, casting back each other's splendor, looked like some great collection of brilliant gems. The gorgeous parlors, the dancing and supper rooms, were all brilliantly lighted, and airy figures of grace and beauty, flitting about therein, altogether formed a picture of loveliness scarcely to be excelled.

Mr. Evarts seemed to enjoy the occasion with marked zest; and though he had but lately recovered from a severe attack of gout, was almost continually on

the floor amid the light, graceful forms, as they whirled in the dance. Every lady, as a matter of course, was anxious to be his partner, and once, when a figure was ended, he was so pressed by a dozen fair ones, each urging with eager faces and mischievous eyes, her claims to him in the ensuing dance, that he was forced to call on young Melton and others to come to his rescue, and then gracefully acknowledged that he was vanquished.

The dance had continued until near midnight, when they all repaired to the spacious dining-room, where supper awaited them. Everything was in the richest profusion and elegance, and "all went merry as a marriage bell." The warm lustre of many a bright eye, responded to many a delicate toast that was drank that night in the sparkling wine, and the blush on many a fair cheek betrayed the tender compliment whispered in the dear one's ear.

After an hour thus spent, the supper was over and the guests separated into couples, groups and parties. Some promenaded in the open air, along the avenue, while here and there, a couple sat ensconced in a pretty little bower, with no ear to hear their tender whisperings—autumn leaves rustling from overhanging boughs and little stars twinkling down upon them through the tree-tops. A lady sat out on the long veranda in the mellow moonlight, with a guitar on her lap, and while her voice of richness and melody swelled on the still night air, a group of admirers stood around, enchanted. Another at a piano in the parlor, attracted a crowd of listeners with the touching air of a tender love-song, or

thrilled them with delight with the notes of a Scottish air. Some were moving about, admiring the paintings or other objects, while here and there, you might see a party in a retired nook, engaged in a game of chess, or such other as suited best their fancy. Let us pause here.

Around a table, in one of the sequestered corners, sat Henry and Nora, Horace and his sister. They were engaged in a game of whist: Henry and Nora playing as partners, and Horace and his sister, their opponents. Neither party appeared to be deeply interested in the game, or to play with much skill. Nora could not pay proper attention, as Horace occasionally detained her hand when it was her turn to play, and the blushing Jeannette trumped her partner's trick, while listening to the sly whisperings of young Melton.

They played on thus for some minutes, none keeping any score of the game, when Melton arose and proposed to break up the game, declaring that his partner could not be expected to play with any skill, so long as Evarts continued to annoy her; while Horace retorted by affirming that he and his sister, "would have beaten every round, had not Henry kept Jeannette's mind in constant confusion by his plagued whisperings."

With a merry laugh from one party, and a blush from the other, they left the room, but not in the order as they had played; for somehow, Horace led Nora, while young Melton went off with Jeannette on his arm. The former couple took their way out toward the front entrance, while the latter proceeded to the rear, and thence to the garden, which appeared lovely

as it lay bathed in the mellow moonlight. As they sit, hand in hand, in a pretty little bower, let us see what they are saying.

"Henry, why are you so silent? Are you thinking of some dear, but absent college-mate, that makes you forget that I am by your side?"

"It is because you are by my side that I am silent, Jeannette. Were it any other than yourself, I might *feel less* and talk more. But with *you*, Jeannette — with this little hand in mine, and under the influences which now operate upon me, I am *too* happy, my heart is *too* full for its feelings to be spoken. Look, Jeannette," said he, pointing to the heavens, "do you see that bright, beautiful orb? It is most lovely and dazzingly beautiful. *Your face, Jeannette, is brighter to me than the moonlight is to the earth.* See yon twinkling star! It seems to smile on you and me. It is the brightest one, Jeannette, and shines with a softer and purer lustre than any in the firmament; yet it wants the *tender* brightness that beams from your mild, blue eye — that *warm* light, that sheds such a quiet joy and calm serenity o'er my soul."

"And do you love me so fondly, dear Henry?"

"Love you? No, I adore you! I love you *too well*, my little angel. It is wicked in me to love you as I do; but I could not help it, if I would."

"You should not love me thus, dear Henry. Your love is all the world to me, and I should be lonely indeed, without it; but I tremble when I hear you speak so, lest God should withdraw his favor from us, that you allow a poor, weak mortal to become his rival in your affections."

"God will never withdraw his favor from you, darling. You are too like one of His own angels, that He should ever leave you. Be so always, Jeannette, and teach me to school this wild passion of mine, and to love you with a holier love. Then in after years, as our little barque glides smoothly along over life's waters, your gentle influence will lead me closer to the God you worship, and our hands will still be united, when time, with us, shall be no more."

"God grant me the blessed mission, dear Henry. The lot of mortal could not be happier than mine would be."

"And would not my happiness be as great as yours, Jeannette? To walk side by side with you through life: to have thee ever near me: to feel the gentle pressure of this little hand: to gaze into those tender eyes and feel the warm light beam on me: to have thee partner of my every joy: to keep away the tear-drop, when one should dim your eye: to have the knowledge of being loved, and the power to bless: to feel your gentle influence giving a limit to untamed passions, and a moderation to ungodly ambitions, and leading me on gently to the Holy Light. Jeannette, *oh! Jeannette, love me!*"

"Love you, Henry?"

"Yes, Jeannette, whisper it to me, and let me see if my soul is capable of aught more of bliss."

"I—love—you—*dear* Henry!"

The moon silvered the maple tops, and little stars peeped through the falling leaves of the rose-vine.

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About an hour afterwards, when the lovers returned to the scene of festivities, the young people were all getting ready to leave for their respective homes, and were hurriedly making their adieux. In a very short time, there was only one carriage in waiting, and that one was in attendance for Nora Lavine. She soon made her appearance, leaning on the arm of Horace Evarts, and, having kissed Jeannette good-night at the doorway, was soon seated in her carriage and was being driven homeward, with her lover at her side. They were not many minutes in reaching Elmwood Cottage. At the door, she gave Horace her hand, which he detained a few minutes, as he said:

"You are aware, Nora, that I shall not see you again for at least a week — possibly two — as I am compelled to go to New York to-morrow, to transact important business for my father. You have no idea, Nora, how sad it makes me feel to leave you. If I were inclined to superstition, I should be really miserable; for, although I am ashamed to acknowledge it, I have a terrible presentiment of some coming evil. I do not credit any such feelings, and attribute it to a depression of spirits, which has its origin in my contemplated absence from your side. Still, darling, I can not shake off the feeling that has possessed me for the last hour, and I am so deeply impressed by it, that nothing could drive me from you just now, but the imperative duty I owe my father. I believe the thought of that villain, MacKenzie, oppresses me. Did you know that he returned last evening to our village?"

"I was not aware of it."

"Well, Nora, he did return, and is now here. I hope you will not think I am over-particular, when I beg to remind you of your promise to me, that you would see him no more. I do not doubt you, dearest; I feel that you are all that is good, pure and beautiful; and still I dread this man. I know him to be a fascinating serpent."

"You need not fear, Horace. He can do us no possible harm, and I renew my promise, that I will not see him again. Come back as soon as you can. And now, dearest, good-by. I must go in, for I know my mother has been keeping a lonely watch for me."

"Good-by, my sweet bride — but you will give me one kiss before we part, will you not, my own little Nora?"

"You have my heart, Horace. I can trust you."

The young man drew the trembling girl to him and pressed his lips to hers.

"And now, Nora, if this man annoys you while I am gone, send me a note to New York. Will you promise me this, also?"

"I will."

The door closed, and a little while later, Horace Evarts was in his room at his father's residence, asleep — dreaming blissful dreams of the little, dark-eyed Creole beauty.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

HORACE EVARTS had been in New York several days. MacKenzie was alone in his room, at the hotel in our little village. He appeared to be disturbed. Occasionally he would rise from his seat and walk the floor for several minutes, then resuming his chair and turning to a table, would pour out a glass of wine, and drink it off.

He muttered to himself, "What can she mean? Can it be possible that she heard of my connection with that little Mississippi affair? No indeed! that thing was arranged too cleverly for that. What then can be the matter? Up to the time I left here, ten days ago, she had been receiving me as a friend, treating me with a noticeable degree of confidence, and evidently pleased with my society. All at once she cuts my acquaintance, and when I call to see her, the servant says, 'not at home,' or 'indisposed,' or some such cursed bosh. In vain I await her in her accustomed retreats, or linger near the cottage, in the hopes of seeing her. She no longer strolls by the river-side, or watches the setting sun from her window. Here I have been a week in this miserable little place, foregoing all the pleasures of the world — travel, variety and city life — in the futile effort to win one woman's good will. A week? Why I have been here most of two

months. But pshaw! I have plenty of money. That cracked-brained Southerner has lined my pockets for the next six months. Possibly it may be well for me to remain here a month longer. The girl is certainly very beautiful—so young and blooming—scarcely seventeen, and so artless and innocent, too. Egad! I can not let her go. *Just now* is my time. That ever-in-the-way lover of hers is in New York: no doubt enjoying himself finely—perfectly snug in her love, and confident in her security. But he will be back in a week or ten days. I will contrive to see her immediately, and if she doesn't receive me kindly before his return, I'll resort to some strategy, and see if I can't manage to send him away, and break up that pretty little prospect of conjugal bliss. If I can get him off and drive her to desperation, I can have everything my own way. It is my impression, the young buck has his suspicions, and that he has been whispering them into her ears. But never mind, I'll find out before another sun rises and sets."

At this junction of his soliloquy, the sound of a footstep near his door arrested his attention, and in a moment more a low tap was heard. In response to his "come in," a young woman entered.

"Ah! my pretty Bessie," said he, "I am indeed, most happy to see you. I hope you are able to give me some pleasant news to recompense me for such long waiting. How is your young lady, Miss Nora, this morning?"

"Miss Nora is well, Mr. MacKenzie," replied the girl, "and for the first time in several days has gone

out for a walk. She is unattended and bade me wait with her mother until her return, which she said would probably not be within an hour. She has been a little sad ever since Mr. Evart's departure for New York, and has scarcely left the house since he went."

"Can you tell me, Bessie, what is the cause of this change?"

"I cannot, yet I more than suspect that you are in some way connected with it. Yesterday, as I was passing the parlor, where Miss Nora and her mother were conversing, I heard her mother say: 'It is well to be guarded, my child, but I really think Horace exacting in requiring you to make such a promise. However, if his opinions were well-founded—' Here they perceived me, and the subject of conversation was changed."

"Why did they so suddenly drop it—do they distrust you?"

"Oh, no indeed. They have always placed the utmost confidence in me,"—the young girl was silent for a moment, and then resumed—"and they have always been very kind and good to me, and I wish, Mr. MacKenzie, I had not entered this affair with you—not even for all your gold."

"Why, Bessie, my little girl, how silly you do talk. Come, take some of this wine—you are nervous."

MacKenzie poured out and handed her a glass of wine, which, after a little hesitation, she drank. MacKenzie then resumed.

"I am only for making Miss Nora happy. If I can once get her to love me, she will be far happier than

with that young fellow Evarts. He would keep her cooped up here all her life like a bird in a cage, without ever seeeing any thing of the great, beautiful world, outside of this village. I want to take her to Italy and Rome, and Paris and London, and let her see some of the beauties and wonders of the world. She shall have money without stint or limit, and her very wish shall be anticipated. Then my pretty Bessie will be more like a queen's attendant than the house-maid of a little country cottage."

The girl was silent and thoughtful for a moment, and then her scruples seemed to have been removed, for she went on:

"I was going to say that I did not think Miss Nora distrusted me, but she is particularly silent about you, and will not answer any questions concerning you. In truth, she told me last evening, that she preferred I would never mention your name to her again. I am sure Mr. Evarts is the cause of this, and that he has asked her not to see you again; and the reason for her having kept so close, was to avoid seeing you. I told her yesterday that you had gone away, and that is why she is out this morning."

"That 's all clever, Bessie. You just keep your eyes open, and let me hear from you again, to-morrow. I will see her directly, but of course can not now foresee the result of our interview. After she returns from her walk, you must closely observe her conduct, and talk with her as much as you can. Remember, Bessie, you are sworn to render me all the assistance you can."

"Yes, sir; and you are to pay me well for my services —"

"Fifty dollars on the day that witnesses the success of my cause. As an earnest, take this," and he gave her a handful of silver coin.

They were now about to descend the stairway. MacKenzie paused until the girl had got out of sight, as she hurried back to the cottage. MacKenzie bent his steps toward the grove of trees, which she had designated as the retreat of Nora Lavine.

As the reader has already been informed, Nora Lavine had not seen MacKenzie since her lover left her for New York, which took place about a week prior to the conversation just related. Several times, MacKenzie called at Elmwood, but as soon as she was made aware of his coming, she would retire to her room, and send some excuse for not seeing him. More than once she was almost persuaded to see him for a moment, and to let him know, unequivocally, that his visits were no longer agreeable. But would she not be compelled to explain the sudden change toward him? and how could she do this without bringing in the name of her lover? If it should happen that Horace was mistaken, and MacKenzie could prove beyond all doubt that he had been grievously slandered, would not her explanation involve him and Horace Evarts in some dangerous complications? Suppose, on the other hand, that Horace had painted his character truly, would MacKenzie, on hearing it, hesitate to take any mean advantage, thus making him more to be feared than an honorable enemy?

When Nora Lavine revolved these thoughts in her mind, the idea of seeing MacKenzie or making any

explanation of her conduct toward him, would be immediately abandoned, and she decided to persevere in the course she had been pursuing, thinking and hoping that MacKenzie would get offended and leave the village. The situation of Nora Lavine, to say the least, was embarrassing. Here was a young man of fine, honest, manly face, who, according to his own story, was a soldier in the same cause in which her father's life was sacrificed. Not only this, he had actually been a member of the very regiment which her father had commanded. They had fought side by side through bloody battles, and shared each other's dangers and hardships. He too, had lost one preciously dear to him — an only brother, whose fate was not much less sad than her noble father's had been. This young man, MacKenzie, had accidentally met her, and on the occasion of their very first meeting, had rendered her assistance that in all probability was the means of saving her life. As a matter of course, she felt profoundly grateful, and did not hesitate to receive him cordially as a friend and benefactor, and the mind of the fair, credulous young girl became strongly prejudiced in favor of her preserver.

MacKenzie had always been remarkable polite, attentive and considerate, and had never asked or claimed any but a friend's part in her affections. Did he not have a right to her friendship and gratitude? It really seemed so. But then, the man whom she had promised to marry, and whom she loved with all the fondness and tenderness of which her soul was capable, had pronounced him a "gambler and a villain." He

had never *seen* him gamble—never *knew* him to be guilty of any thing dishonorable. He had only *heard* these things. After all, might not Horace be mistaken? Might not just a little tinge of jealousy have had something to do with his prejudices? If so, what would MacKenzie think of her? Of course, that she was simply the most heartless and ungrateful creature on earth. In this unhappy and feverish state of mind, the poor girl hardly knew how to act; and when her maid had told her the day before that MacKenzie had gone away, she felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted from her heart.

Under the same clustering vines; beneath the same spreading trees; on the same mossy mound, where not many weeks before MacKenzie had seen her weaving her garland of wild flowers, Nora Lavine sat. Not many yards away from her, flowed calmly the waters from whose treacherous beauty his strong arms had rescued her. The wild flowers had faded now; the green foliage had turned to golden, and the yellow leaf, from the overhanging bough, lost its hold, and, rustling idly with a sort of melancholy sound, fell upon the water and was borne silently away — suggesting to the mind the thought of some lost joy or faded hope.

Nora Lavine watched the silent river, and the floating leaves; and her mind went back to the time when first Horace Evarts met her — a little girl in her short dress, with her bonnet in one hand and flowers in the other, and her hair, all dishevelled from her gleeful running, hanging around her forehead and on her bare shoulders. And then of the joys and love of later

years; and how their love waxed strong, until now she could see the day just ahead when she should be his wife, and he her own loving husband.

The yellow leaves, rustling through the air, fell upon the waters; and Nora Lavine watched them glide away. In her thoughts she was so wrapped, she heard not the soft foot-fall, and was not aware that she was not alone, until MacKenzie stood before her, vis-a-vis.

CHAPTER IX.

EVOLVEMENT OF THE PLOT.

NORA was startled, like a frightened fawn, at the sudden apparition. She could hardly believe the reality of the situation, as MacKenzie stood before her pale and silent. For a moment she bowed her head, and covered her face with her hands, as if to shut off an unwelcome vision. As she removed them, and looked up into his eyes she saw that he was regarding her with a kind, but sorrowful look. Turning crimson she gasped rather than spoke:

"Mr. MacKenzie, I thought you were far away."

"And hoped so," was his answer.

She was about to make some reply, but she saw that he was reading her very soul, and again the rich color mounted her cheek, and her eyes sinking beneath his fixed and searching gaze she was silent.

"Miss Lavine, how have I offended you?"

"You have given me no cause of offence, Mr. MacKenzie. I feel under the most profound obligations to you, and can never forget the services you rendered me when we first met. But—but—but sir, why do you seek me when your good sense must have told you I wished to be alone?"

"Nora Lavine, hear me! In the name of a sympathy that has sprung from our common sorrows: in the name of the memory of your murdered father: in the

name of the love I cherished for him, hear me! I am all alone, and a wanderer in the world. I have no settled home, and no one to love me. My father died when I was very young. Of the fate of my only brother you already know. I never had a gentle sister to soothe me with tender words of love, or to comfort my heart when stern sorrow pressed upon it. I never knew a fond mother's love that would have been my joy and blessing — never had her guiding hand to lead me. I was turned loose at an early age upon the sea of life, with a nature passionate and impulsive, which afterwards became saddened over the ruins of our Lost Cause, and embittered towards all mankind by the memory of the wanton and cruel murder of my only brother, whose crime was an honorable battling for his country's rights, against tyrannical usurpations. To-day, he and your father sleep side by side in the land they died for. You are many years my junior, and in this respect you were more fortunate than I; for you were too young to keenly feel your loss, and as you grew up to maturer years you had a dear mother's tender love to soften the memory of the cruel tragedy. In another respect I was more fortunate than you, if the possession of vast wealth can be called good fortune. Though the estate of myself and brother was almost entirely appropriated or destroyed by our implacable enemies, yet we owned a large sum of money in a foreign bank, placed there some years before to our credit by the last will and testament of our uncle. On the death of my brother, this untouched inheritance was all mine; and immediately after the war I came into possession of

more money than I ever dreamed of. Do you think I was happy? No indeed; I was miserable, for I was positively alone in the world, with but little congeniality or sympathy in common with my fellow man, and had the friendship of no living being save that which was bought by the glitter of my gold. I sought novelty and pleasure in travel; wandered o'er the wide world; looked for quiet and happiness beneath the balmy skies of Italy, and roamed amid its flowers and its vine-clad hills. As time wore on they all grew tame to my accustomed vision, and their charms vanished. Then I would turn from these to the dark-eyed Italian beauties; and, while the softest strains of music would float on the quiet air, and dreamy eyes languished with love, I felt that I was more than ever alone. I went to Rome, the Niobe of nations — the once proud mistress of a conquered world — still grand and beautiful, but all her pristine glory gone forever. As I stood amidst the scenes of the most thrilling incidents that ever occurred in the drama of human life, and gazed on crumbling monuments of ancient greatness, I was impressed with the utter instability of all earthly grandeur, and turned sickening from the contemplation. I visited Greece, the inventress of the sciences, the mother of Arts, the land of heroes and the grave of Leonidas. But when I would linger on its legends, and ponder on its deeds of ancient valor, bitter and tragic memories of my own loved land would rise up before me in panoramic array, and I turned my back, too, on this fair country of chivalry. I passed through the halls of arts and sciences, and sat in the rooms

where poets had sung. I went to the Holy Land, and standing on sacred mounts viewed the plains where Prophets fed their flocks. I wandered by the Dead Sea, and trod its shores of barren desolation; and shuddered when I gazed on the bright but bitter waters, for I saw the reflection of my own loveless life. I went to Edinburgh, the great centre of Scotland's long past woes, and tried to enjoy for a while the grand, wild pictures of beauty that loom up around and beyond in every direction. I visited the dark historic Grampian Hills, that stand out on the horizon, giving a limit to man's vision. I looked on the broad incomparable 'Frith of Forth,' and watched the countless vessels that were plying to and fro the eternal waters with which it blends; while I could listen to the heavings and the dashings of the wild waves as they beat and lashed the rugged shores in ceaseless sublimity. I gazed on the crumbled towers of renowned castles until my mind was lost in the tragic events of the past, when the wicked unflinching desperado, Bothwell, murdered Scotland's King, and poisoned the name of her Queen. Thought of the royal palace Holyrood, the scene of terrible commotions and crimes, and of the imprisonment of the beautiful but unhappy Mary, until the exciting events in her life came up in a panorama before me, and I saw her kneeling at last beneath the fatal death instrument, invoking in her dying moment, God's blessings on her murderers. I listened to the echoing thunders of the wild storms of the highlands, and was reminded of the terrible explosion that blew to atoms the sleeping Darnley, and shook as with an

earthquake the grand old hills of this modern Athens. The winds howl and moan, and sway the great trees of the forest, or sigh mournfully around these old seats of learning and renown, as if the departed spirits of the Past were bewailing the mistakes and miseries of olden times. And while the events of the Past, stranger than any fiction, excited wonder and awe, the contemplation of them impressed the mind with a most sorrowful sadness, and I was glad to turn away from them. At last I retraced my steps and came back home—home? came back to the United States. Fortune or caprice wafted my little barque to that quiet, pretty village yonder, which rests so snugly in its lovely vale. You know the rest, Nora; how it was my good fortune to rescue you from those bright waters there, which now seem so calm and harmless. You gave me your friendship and confidence, and I felt that a new life was dawning upon me; that I had found at last one being whom I could honor and cherish; one at least who could sympathize with me, and think gently and kindly about me. And now, here in the broad face of nature, with heaven's blue canopy above us, and the hand of the Creator seen in his beautiful works about us, I do solemnly affirm that the intervening space — from the time I saw you yonder with outstretched hand reaching for the wild flowers that hung just over the water's edge, until one week ago — is, and will ever be, cherished by me as the happiest era of all my life. For some unaccountable cause, and without a moment's warning, you persistently refused to see me, and I felt that the light of my life's rising star had all been

extinguished. Yesterday morning I left the village; left it with the determination of quitting forever the scene of my bitter disappointment. I could not do so. I felt that I would be leaving behind me the grave of buried hopes which no time would ever revive. I returned, and this morning saw you when you left your cottage. I soon after followed. If my presence here be an intrusion, you have but to bid me leave you, and I will go forth again and roam purposeless and objectless, and seek in the whirl of life and the scenes of nature forgetfulness of your face and the first hopes that ever budded in my bosom. You have heard me. Shall I go, or will you let me stay by your side — living in the warmth of your sympathy — the only blessing I know on earth? You weep? You will not drive me from you?"

Nora had been deeply impressed with the libertine's appeal to her sympathies; but soon brushed her tears away and rose to go.

On their return walk, MacKenzie put all his powers of entertainment into requisition in the vain effort to interest her or draw her into a conversation. He dilated on the beauty of the scene that stretched all around and before them, until the eloquence of his language gave a more golden tint to the great fields of ripened corn, and a softer hue to the autumn leaves. He spoke of the lovely landscape that lay everywhere beneath the balmy skies of Italy. Told of her fair meadows, her sweet flowers, her lovely maidens, and the never-ceasing music of her singing birds. Then he would point away across the distance to some neat

cottage surrounded with shade trees, and vines clambering its painted walls, and call it a "paradise," a "home of innocence and love;" and would contrast the lives of its inmates with that of those who live in the great city of continued tumult, surrounded by vice and corruption; and he would sigh for just such a cottage home, away from the world, where he might spend his days in peace and happiness with some fair being whom he could love and cherish.

Nora Lavine had no reply. She was ill at ease, and she moved along silent and thoughtful, with eyes looking downward. She was thinking of Horace Evarts in New York, and had not forgotten the promise she gave him a week ago, when she granted him that good-by kiss. Well too, did she remember the sad presentiments he spoke of, and ah! the name he had associated therewith.

Just before they reached the cottage gate, they met Henry Melton and a young companion returning from a morning ride. Melton raised his hat and bowed with characteristic politeness to the young lady, but the cold glance which he bestowed on her escort, and the irrepressible shade of annoyance that passed over his features did not passed unobserved. In a moment more they were at the cottage gate, and as it swung open, Nora said:

"I will not trouble you to go further, Mr. MacKenzie."

"I may call to see you again, may I not, Miss Nora?"

The young girl blushed deeply, looked terribly confused and was silent.

The eyes of MacKenzie seemed melting with a half sad, half reproachful look, as he fixed them upon her eyes and, in a low measured tone, said:

"The only joy I know in this world, Nora, is in your friendship. Will you drive me from you?"

"Mr. MacKenzie may call in the morning if he wishes."

She hurried into the house, and thence to her room, and flinging herself on a bed buried her face in her hands and wept. For the first time in all her young life she felt ashamed and guilty. Ashamed of what? Guilty of what? Poor girl, she had nothing to be ashamed of. She was not guilty. It was a conviction of circumstances that was weaving a web of wretchedness about her.

CHAPTER X.

SCHEMES AND JEALOUSY.

THAT evening, as MacKenzie and a friend of his were playing billiards, at the saloon of the village hotel, they did not notice the entrance of a little urchin, until he asked: "Is airy one you gemman Mr. Kinzy?"

"Yes, my little man. What can I do for you?"

The lad stepped forward and handed the speaker a slip of paper, whereon was written:—"I await you at your room; have something of importance; am in a hurry; come quick." The note bore no address or signature, but MacKenzie understood.

"Well, Bessie," he said, as he unlocked the door of his room; "come in and be seated. Now tell us what it is you have for us."

"This morning, when Miss Nora returned from her walk, she seemed more nervous and excited than I ever saw her. She went right on to her room without seeing her mother, and when I went up to her, a little later, she was lying on the bed, weeping. She said she was not well, and wanted to be alone; so I left, and did not see her again until dinner. At the table—although I could see she was trying to control herself—she appeared scarcely less unhappy and embarrassed. After the meal was over, she called her mother into the parlor. I will tell you as near as I can what she said."

Here the girl related all that passed, during the morning, between MacKenzie and Nora Lavine, as given by the latter to her mother.

"What did Mrs. Lavine say, after Nora got through?"

"She said a great deal more than I can repeat. I remember, among other things, that she told Miss Nora she need not make herself unhappy: that her seeing you was no violation of the promise she had given Mr. Evarts, as you forced yourself into her presence when she was not expecting you. She told her that the mistake she had made in promising to see you to-morrow, could be remedied by sending you a note withdrawing the privilege; and she counselled her to write immediately to Mr. Evarts, giving him a minute account of every thing that had transpired in his absence."

"Did she write, as her mother had advised her?"

"She did," replied the girl, "and I have the letters here now, in my possession. She instructed me to mail the one to Mr. Evarts, myself, and to send yours direct to you by a special messenger. As she directed, I called for her letters at the office, and got one from Mr. Evarts—I know his hand-writing."

"Bessie, give me these letters."

"Here is the one addressed to yourself, sir."

MacKenzie took the letter, carefully opened the envelope and taking the note therefrom, placed the envelope in his pocket-book.

"Why are you so particular with the envelope, Mr. MacKenzie?"

"I do not know but that it may possibly be of some

service to me. Besides, you know it is her handwriting, and — well, I shall prize it on that account. Let us see what she says!" and he read aloud:

"'MR. MACKENZIE:— When I inform you that my purpose in writing this note, is to withdraw the privilege I gave you this morning of calling to see me on the morrow, you will doubtless think me inconsistent and ungrateful. You have never given me any cause of offence, and you once did me a service for which I shall ever be grateful; but there is an imperative duty resting upon me that requires me to forbid you my presence. Without making any explanation I will now tell you, emphatically and unequivocally, that I will not see you again. Of course you will not seek me further, if you are a gentleman.

"Respectfully,

"NORA LAVINE.'"

MacKenzie knew well how to control himself, but it required his best efforts to repress the rising flood of rage and disappointment that was welling up from the very bottom of his heart. But he was as self-possessed as ever when, a moment after, he looked up and said:

"Well, Bessie, that's cool; and now let us have the other letters."

"The other letters, Mr. MacKenzie? Why, what can you want them for? They can give pleasure to no one but to those to whom they are addressed, and can be of no possible use to you, since of course you do not expect to see Miss Nora again."

"See her again? Of course I do. Will you give me the letters?"

As tightly as MacKenzie held the reins of self-control, he was evidently growing impatient, and this impatience was only aggravated by the girl's reply.

"Mr. MacKenzie, the rewards you promised me for my services in this affair, were conditional. I see no prospect of those conditions ever being fulfilled; and I am not willing longer to go on as I have done, unless I have something to fall back on, for in case of detection, I shall lose my place and my mistress' affection by this game of deception and treachery."

There was a slight quiver of the lip as MacKenzie sneeringly replied:

"You have got to be very scrupulous all at once,"—and then a moment's pause, during which he recovered his composure, and his tone was much more gentle and conciliatory, as he resumed:—"I want to secure Miss Nora's happiness as well as my own, Bessie. Of course I can do nothing now, except by resorting to some underhand—as you will say,—means."

"But how do you propose to proceed. She declares emphatically in that note, that she will never see you again."

"I know not definitely how I shall proceed. I think one or both of the letters you have, would give me some suggestion as to the best mode of action. It is evident now that I must use some strategy; and, however unpleasant it may be to us both, and though it may at first cause Miss Nora some unhappiness, in the end, I know it will be for her good; and instead

of condemning you for the part you took in the matter, she will thank you. What money do you require?"

"If you will give me ten dollars now and promise to give me ten more at the end of a week, unconditionally, I will give you the letters, and in the meantime will be guided entirely by your orders."

"You are exacting, Miss Bessie, but here is the money; and now give me the letters."

She carefully stowed away the money, and then handed him the letters, the seals of which he proceeded to break: first the one written to Horace Evarts. It is unnecessary for us to give the letter, as it would be mere repetition. In writing it, Nora had kept her mother's advice strictly, and gave to her lover a detailed account of her unexpected and unavoidable interview with MacKenzie that morning, and also inclosed a copy of the letter she had just sent him. She closed her letter in these words:

"You have only been gone a little more than a week, dear Horace, and yet it seems to me a much longer time; and I have been sadder during your absence than at any former period of my life. As soon as you can possibly get through with your business, *come immediately to Nora, who is and will always be yours and yours only.*"

The four pages of the sheet of paper on which the letter was written, had been filled out, and the words which we have italicised were written on a *separate slip of paper* and enclosed in the letter. *This slip MacKenzie took out, carefully folded and put away in his pocket-book.*

He then opened the one sent by Horace to Nora. This was a long letter, full of expressions of the tenderest devotion, confidence and love. Its closing lines were as follows:

"I have not heard from you since I left, but I know that all is well, or else you would have written me as you promised. I will now lay aside my pen, but the theme will still linger with me. In two days I shall be with you. To-morrow is Saturday. The next day, a little after eleven o'clock, I shall be in our happy little village. I shall immediately repair to the church of your accustomed worship, and if you are not there, I will seek you at Elmwood. Until then, little darling, I bid you good-by."

* * * * * *

About the same hour of the same day that MacKenzie and his guilty accomplice were reading the intercepted letters, and concocting their villainous plans for the blighting of two innocent hearts, Horace Evarts was in his room at the St. Nicholas, in New York, packing his trunk and making final preparations for leaving for his home, very early the next morning. His face wore a radiant, happy expression, and his heart was light and gay, as he hummed a favorite air which he and Nora had often sung together. The young man was thinking of her, and was enjoying in anticipation the pleasure of their meeting on the morrow, and was listening already to her gentle words of confidence and love. He was about completing all his arrangements for his departure, when a porter entered and handed him a letter. It was stamped at our little village, and

Horace immediately recognized the hand-writing of Henry Melton. Eagerly opening it he read:

"MY DEAR HORACE:—As you are expected home in a few days and can not now see any occasion for this letter, you will be surprised. The fact is, I am about to start for Boston, where I propose to complete my law-studies, and I write to say good-by. I see no earthly need of going out of my native State to study law, as Maryland can afford me advantages equal, if not superior, in that particular respect, to any in the Union; but my father thinks Boston is the place for me, and for Boston in two hours I start. You will say this is unexpected. Very true. You remember I told you, on the occasion of your party at Myrtle Lawn, that I should not leave home before the last of November, and it is not yet the first. All at once, however, my father got very anxious for my immediate departure, and nothing that I could say would convince him that I would derive no advantage by being there so early; so I have yielded to his wishes in this matter, as I do in nearly all things, and am ready to go. It really makes me quite sad, my dear Horace, to leave without seeing you, and I should feel the separation still more keenly were it not that we can communicate our thoughts and feelings to each other through letters, which I hope will be frequent and regular. There is a little dove-eyed angel here, too, whom I am almost crazy at leaving; and it would put my courage to a severe test, did not her papa declare most solemnly that she shall not marry me until six months after I get my license

to practise law. So I play the philosopher, and put the best face possible on the matter. A four months' absence, however, is pretty trying.

"I have been very busy for several days, making my arrangements to get off, and what few spare hours I have had were spent with your father and Jeannette — you know my object in going there was to console them in their sorrow for your absence. I make this statement by way of apology for my inability to give you anything definite from your little queen Creole. I have not been to call on her since you left, and have seen her only once since the night of the party. She was then out, just returning from a walk, and was escorted by that man MacKenzie. Miss Nora knows that I do not quite fancy the fellow, and I noticed that she blushed deeply when I raised my hat to her and very coldly saluted him. If you will not be offended or think me officious, I will presume to advise you, dear Horace, to persuade Miss Nora to drop his acquaintance. It is true that this would be embarrassing, under the peculiar circumstances, for her to do, and she might be at a loss how to act. She remembers that to this MacKenzie she owes the possible preservation of her life; and what he tells her of his association with her father during the war, and a great deal more — none of which I am quite disposed to accept — has impressed her mind generously towards him. I repeat, I would counsel you to warn her of him. I believe that he is a cool impostor and a polished villain, though I have no certain evidence to that effect. I do know enough about him, however, to warrant me in saying

that he is licentious and immoral; and as such, is under no circumstances, a fit companion for a pure, innocent young girl. I do not know that Miss Nora has seen MacKenzie, except at the time I mentioned; but I notice that he has been here ever since you left, and so I suppose, she continues to receive him as a visitor and a friend, as she has heretofore done.

"I have not time to write more, and must say good-by. Do not fail to write to me often; and now if you please, Horace, when you write, always tell me something and at length, about — *your pa's family*.

"Of course you will always write about yourself and Miss Nora. I shall ever be delighted at hearing happy news from you, and I know that none other will come.

"In all truth, your friend,

H. M."

Horace Evarts holds the open sheet before his eyes, at arm's length; and, while his face is ashen, and his lips compressed, he stands gazing upon it.

CHAPTER XI.

APPEARANCES AGAINST HER.

A LOVELY Sabbath morning dawned on our quiet little village. It was a day of rest and repose, and all work was at an end. The din of the hammer and saw was suspended, and the rumbling of the manufactories was hushed to silence. All nature seemed calm and serene, and even the golden tints of the village shade trees seemed to have a brighter hue in the crisp morning air.

The quiet of the pretty streets was undisturbed, and scarce a sound was heard save the music of the church bells, as they summoned their little flocks to the worship. The low solemn melody brought a passing forgetfulness of business cares to the worldly man, and perhaps gave a softening and restraining influence to the evil passions of the wicked. The scene and the occasion were not without their moral influence upon Nora Lavine, as, with her brow resting on her hand, she sat at one of the windows in the parlor of Elmwood cottage. The young girl felt a tender sympathy with all around her, and her heart, subdued by holy influences, expanded with divine love. She was alone. Owing to a slight headache, from which she had suffered since the day before, she had declined attending divine worship that morning, and, as her mother had gone to church, and the maid Bessie had just left, she was sole occupant of the cottage.

It was half past eleven o'clock. The church bells no longer chimed, for the worshippers had all assembled and were making their offerings. A tall, handsome young man with dark hair and eyes, a pale face, and nervous excited manners, peered in at a church door until his eyes rested on a certain pew, wherein a respectable middle-aged lady sat alone. Turning away abruptly the young man walked rapidly down the street, round a corner, and out towards the suburbs.

He had approached within a few hundred yards of the cottage when the hand of a woman thrust through a window not far distant, waved a white handkerchief. Immediately a third person emerged from an obscure retreat near the cottage wall, and proceeding to the house straightway, without hesitation, entered the open door. Nora Lavine was aroused from her musings by hearing a quick, light step approach her, and before she was able to reach the door, MacKenzie had entered and stood in her presence.

The hot blood of anger and indignation for a moment glowed in the burning eye and crimson cheek of the insulted girl, but it almost immediately gave way to a deadly pallor, and she swooned and would have fallen had not MacKenzie caught her in his arms. She felt his embrace and the hot breath on her cheeks, and they brought back consciousness to her mind and the seething blood to her brain. Tearing herself from him, and retreating to the farthest corner of the room, she stood the picture of injured innocence; and, while her dark eyes fairly burned with scorn and passion, she exclaimed:

"Coward, hypocrite! How dare you force yourself upon me, and pollute the atmosphere of my home with your vile, degrading presence?"

"Nora, for God's sake hear me just one moment. I would not for my life harm one hair of your head. You would not receive me as a visitor, and I stole in here to bid you an eternal farewell."

"Go, sir! I detest and despise you. I will not bid you farewell. Leave me, or I will call for assistance and have your base hypocrisy and villainy exposed to the world. You do not intend to go, — then *I* will."

She made a wild rush for the door, but MacKenzie had placed himself between it and her, and caught her in his arms. The reaction was sudden. Her brain reeled. The color died out from her cheek. The eyes lost their fiery brightness, and — innocence lay unconscious on the bosom of vice.

MacKenzie placed his victim on a sofa at hand; and, while he knelt by her prostrate form, and was in the act of pressing his polluting lips to hers, another footstep was heard in the doorway, and a third person appeared on the stage.

"Traitor, fiend, devil! What means this."

At the sound of this voice, life and thought and consciousness returned to Nora, and springing from the sofa and clinging desperately to her lover, cried:

"Horace! dear Horace, save me from him, and forgive me, I could not help it."

Forgive me, I could not help it. Father of Heaven! The words went like a dagger to the heart of poor Horace Evarts. He placed her in a seat, and turning upon MacKenzie, said calmly and coldly:

"Explain your presence here. Make your first and your last prayer, devil, for your hour has come."

MacKenzie looked into the muzzle of a bright silver-mounted pistol that was pointed in his face; but there was not the quiver of a muscle as he calmly replied:

"If you shoot now, you slay an unarmed man. Read this, young man, and to-morrow if you want anything more, I shall be at your service."

Horace Evarts mechanically took the letter which was handed out towards him, and glancing at the envelope which bore the subscription, "Mr. MacKenzie, Hotel W———," knew the hand-writing. He cast one reproachful heart-broken look towards Nora Lavine, and opening the envelope took therefrom a slip of paper, and read aloud:

"*Come immediately to Nora who is, and will always be yours, and yours only.*"

A poisonous reptile strikes his fatal blow, then noiselessly glides away. So went MacKenzie.

Nora Lavine, in an instant saw it all, and was speechless. Her face became marble-like in its deathly pallor, a shadow passed before her vision, and she knew no more.

Her eyes opened at last, but Horace had vanished, and she was alone.

"Horace! Oh, Horace!" she moaned. "Come back. Come back. I am not guilty. Do not leave me thus. Oh, God! he is gone for ever."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PATERNAL VETO.

HENRY MELTON had been at Boston nearly a month, when one evening a letter was handed to him. It was the first that he had received since his departure from home, and this fact made him a little nervous as he opened it. The long silence of his friends had been a source of much concern to him; and as he could not imagine any reasonable cause therefor, he began to feel neglected. That his father did not write was a matter of no wonder; for he scarcely ever wrote to any one except on business; but he was both surprised and grieved at Jeannette's apparent indifference. He had written to her several times since he left her, and having received no reply, felt really unhappy about it. He did not in the least doubt her constancy or affection, but something somehow had whispered to him that all was not well at Myrtle Lawn. At last a letter had come, and he held in his hand the key to the secret of their long silence. Tearing off the envelope which bore his father's hand-writing, he read:

"MELTON MANSION, Nov. —, 1874.

"MY DEAR SON:—I should have written to you sooner, but my business has required my strict personal attention. As you are aware a great financial distress has been sweeping over the country since the terrible

panic of last year. Its bad effects have lately been visible to a painful extent on our business houses, in our city here. Some princely fortunes have been swept before the storm; and old merchants, whose hair had grown gray in accumulating wealth, now lie prostrate without a dollar. For some days I trembled for the safety of the old House of Melton & Co., but, though the storms beat upon her she weathered them all, and still stands in her pride and glory — stronger and prouder from having passed through the fiery ordeal. The firm of Lennox Bros., which was by many esteemed one of the very strongest in the city, came down in a crash, and cannot, I understand, pay one half of its obligations. Mr. Evarts suffered severely, and would no doubt have been totally wrecked had it not been for a fortunate little speculation he made recently in cotton, by which he is said to have realized a profit of some ten thousand dollars. As it is I think he has lost heavily in the last year or two, and I fear his fortunes are rapidly declining. It is an old adage, that 'misfortunes never come singly,' and, while it is not invariably true, it assuredly was verified in the case of Mr. Evarts. A darker, far sadder calamity than his pecuniary losses befel him soon after you left. His son, you will remember, was engaged to marry the young Southern girl who lives with her widowed mother in the cottage on the suburbs. He was in New York, I think, when you left home. It appears that he suspected the fidelity of the young lady; for, returning unexpectedly, and hastening to the cottage, even before he had gone home, he found Miss Lavine in a most

indelicate situation with a young man, while her mother and the maid servant had gone to church. Instead of spurning her from him, and forgetting that he had ever seen or heard of such a woman, young Evarts acted the part of a poor weak fool; and being maddened by her faithlessness and treachery, threw himself into the whirlpool of dissipation, and for a week or more was raving with intoxication. As soon as he partially recovered his reason he abandoned his home, and has not been heard of since. I do not know how the facts gained publicity, but true it is that there is scarcely a man or woman in all the community around who has not heard of the disreputable affair. The young girl, I understand, is now lying prostrate at her home, not having yet recovered from the effects of a most violent brain fever; and her poor mother it is said, has settled into a state of miserable melancholy, on which it is hardly likely her mind will ever react. These two calamities — his pecuniary misfortunes, and his son's disgraceful connection, and subsequent conduct — have proved a heavy blow to poor Evarts. I have not called at the Lawn for a week or more, but I learn that he looks very much worsted from his troubles, and seems to find no relief from his sorrows, except in his wine-cup. This kind of solace, any one knows, is very deceptive, and is only temporary; for, while it may, for a season, blunt the sting of memory, and thereby mitigate the present anguish, it is destroying what is left of his pecuniary prospects, and bringing him slowly, but surely to a premature grave, while the only inheritance of his children will be dishonor. I am

truly sorry for the family, and deeply lament the untoward circumstances that brought this great trouble upon them. For more than one reason am I grieved. I should sorrow for any one whom I saw in suffering. How much more then must I feel for one with whom I have been so closely associated as a friend for many long years. I have had a real affection for Mr. Evarts, and I enjoyed his society as much and probably more than I did any other man's in all my extensive acquaintance. This society I shall now lose in a great measure; for, as a matter of course, recent occurrences will restrict seriously our future intercourse. His pecuniary loss has nothing on earth to do with this restriction; for that, while it would greatly diminish his influence generally, would not in the least affect my feelings toward him, and I should gladly have rendered him any reasonable assistance in extricating himself from his financial embarrassments. But the other affair certainly does reflect seriously on his family and his name, and I cannot, in justice to my own reputation and character, encourage as free and cordial an intercourse as has heretofore existed between us. As I said before I grieve as much, and probably more than any other living man at the clouds that are lowering o'er the Evarts' house; but 'it is an ill wind that blows nobody good,' and, while nothing scarcely would reconcile me to Mr. Evarts' misfortune, I feel somewhat consoled by the reflection that they will positively remove from your pathway the one serious obstacle to your advancement. Of course I allude to Mr. Evarts' daughter, for whom you thoughtlessly contracted a

boyish passion. I do not doubt but that it may cause you some little trouble to forget her, but your efforts in that direction will be rendered comparatively easy by the reflection that to carry out your once contemplated project, would be to silence for ever every hope of mine, and to defeat irremediably every honorably aspiration you ever knew. I do not deem it at all necessary to go further into this subject, for I give you credit for good sense, and '*verbum sat sapienti.*' Before I close, however, I will mention one thing further for your consideration, that your natural pride may put a balm upon any possible heartaches that this sudden termination of your *affaire du cœur* may cause you. I told you of the illness of the unfortunate young girl at the cottage. The physician who attends her made it known during the early part of her sickness, that it was necessary for some gentle hand to assist her mother in nursing her. (I omitted to state that the young girl's maid, Bessie, I believe her name was, is supposed to have gone off with her mistress's seducer, who was driven off a day or two after the scene at the cottage by threats of violence, uttered by certain young men of the village who were particularly partial to young Evarts.) As might have been supposed all the *ladies* shrank from the contact; but as soon as Miss Evarts heard of the physician's announcement, she immediately volunteered her services, and has since been, I understand, an almost constant attendant at the bed-side of the sick one. It certainly manifests a kind and sympathetic heart; but just think, the wife of —— having for weeks watched at the bed-side of a ——. This

thing alone would stain through life the name of any man who married Jeannette Evarts. I am speaking now with you, and you alone. I would not say this much to another living being. I say it to you from a sense of duty.

"You will write to me as often as once a week. I may not write oftener than once a month. I shall always be glad to hear from you, my son. I have no one else in all the wide world to love; and in all my efforts, and in all my labors, I have an eye single to your future prosperity and promotion.

"Your father,

"EDWIN MELTON."

Amid all the exciting and conflicting passions which this letter aroused in Henry Melton's mind, the ruling one was sympathy in the sorrows of those he loved. He thought of Mr. Evarts, that kind, good old man, who had ever been his friend, who had petted him through his childhood, and later on had treated him with almost the same fondness he showed for his own son, that noble guileless nature, whose heart was ever overflowing with impulses of charity and love. He could see him, in spirit and in body, bowed and broken by the weight of accumulated misfortunes; and then went forth a prayer that God in His mercy would soften the sorrows and lighten the burdens of the old man's heart. Then fancy took him to Elmwood cottage, and he stood by the bedside of poor Nora Lavine, and gazing on the burning eye and fevered cheek, he listened to the mad ravings of delirium; or heard the

low moans, as the wild spirit exhausted sank, and the scarcely audible whisperings, piteously pleading: "Oh, Horace! Come back. Come back!" Then he saw Jeannette kneeling there, like an angel of hope and mercy, watching and praying for wronged innocence; while the tears of sweet sympathy and love were welling up from the dear gentle heart, and streaming down the fair saddened cheeks. Then, too, the poor mother, grief-stricken, silent and speechless, with stealthy steps, moving by the sick one's side, and the pale lips quivered, and the sad eyes were dry; for tears would not come to relieve the pent up heart. And then his mind turned to Horace Evarts, his boyhood's companion, his heart's friend. He thought of his misery, his despair; of the blighted hopes and the wilted garlands of love. Thought of him friendless and alone, friendless and forlorn, buffeting the dark waves of sorrow, with no siren voice of hope to cheer, no whisper of sympathy to encourage. And then he could send his fancy forth, like the dove from the Ark — out on the wide waste in quest of the heartbroken wanderer; but like that dove, it wearied in its boundless flight, and returning, brought no olive leaf — no peace offering to the troubled spirit. Henry Melton raised his glass and scanned the future; he saw his own hitherto rising star shadowed in a mist. Who could tell but that time might develop that mist into a cloud whose impenetrable darkness would not only obscure the brightness of his own destiny, but envelop in sorrow and gloom the glad light of another heart, whose happiness was dearer to him than his life.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVER'S MISSIVE.

IT was evening. The month, November. Jeannette Evarts sat, almost concealed by the rich folding curtains of a window, in the parlor of Myrtle Lawn. She was alone, and in deep and silent meditation. Twilight shades were gathering, and the shadowy veil hung o'er the extended landscape until objects were growing dim in the distance. The air was so still that it scarcely waved the light leaves that, falling from the overhanging boughs, floated lazily, or rustled with a melancholy sound against the window. The last golden streaks were fast fading from the western skies, and the whippowil had already begun his mournful notes in an arbor on the lawn. Two or three stars, earlier than the rest, appeared — pale and trembling — through the almost leafless tree-tops, while the round, full orb of night came blushing up from the east.

Jeannette Evarts was gazing abstractedly through the lengthening shadows, while the long-neglected book lay open on her lap. Her fair young face, pale and sad, wore an expression of profound melancholy, and a tear — unconsciously to her — trembled on the half-closed lid. She was so absorbed in her musings, that she did not hear the soft foot-fall behind her, and was not aware of her father's presence until he laid his hand gently on her shoulder and spoke:

"Is my poor little dove all alone here in the darkness? I thought you had gone to your room to rest yourself and sleep, after your weary vigils by the side of the poor sick girl at Elmwood."

"I did go to my room, dear papa, but I could not sleep."

"And why, my poor little bird? I know you are worn down; for your cheek is pale, your eye has lost much of its brightness, and your step is no longer so light and free."

"It is not the result so much of watching, papa. The body may endure and the eye still retain its brightness. It is the sick heart that causes the eye to grow dim, and the step to lose its lightness. I found I could not sleep, and as you were resting when I came down, I would not disturb you; so I stole here, and have been quietly watching the growing shades of evening, and listening to the low wails of that lone bird in the bower."

"Come here, my child. Now sit you here on my knee, and tell me all you have been thinking."

He put his arm around her, and with her head resting on his bosom, and her eyes filled with tears, she began.

"I have had very sad thoughts, papa. I have been thinking most of my poor unhappy brother, wandering friendless and alone out in the cold world, seeking to drown in his wild rovings the miseries of a broken heart. I was wondering where on the broad earth he might be to-night, and was weeping, dear papa, o'er his long, sad absence. I was sighing to see him once

again; to put my arms around his neck, and to speak words of comfort and of hope; to tell him, papa, that poor dear Nora Lavine is as innocent as an angel. Oh! I feel so wretched, as if I should never be happy again in this world. I was thinking of the sad, sad causes that blighted his happy life, and that exiled him from all that he could ever love. And I thought of the blasted hope and the wrecked life of poor, wronged Nora, and of the bitter sorrow that shut out all joy from her heart for ever. I thought of the dark cloud that hangs like a pall of woe over her way, and how the sweet flowers of promise were wilted just as they were about to bloom in fruition. I thought, too, of the poor grief-stricken, sorrow-bowed mother. I thought of you, my own dear papa, and I became more wretched, because I knew that you were unhappy. Then I thought of—Henry; and I knew how sad he would feel when he heard it all: and I wondered if he, too, like every one else, would believe poor Nora guilty. Papa, is it wrong for me to love Henry *very* much? I would love him even more if I could, if I knew that he would not judge Nora harshly."

"And if he should judge her as others do, dear child, you should not, for this reason, love him less. The judgment would be but a rational conclusion from a review of the circumstantial evidence. *I* do not believe Nora Lavine has done wrong. Let us not speak of this now. It is true, my little girl, we have much cause to be unhappy; but you make yourself unnecessarily so. In your nervous depression, consequent upon a too close attention at the sick bed-side, you magnify the

evils that are upon us. Your poor brother, I hope, will return before very long: for I think his grief will wear away, in a great measure, amid new and exciting scenes: and, although he may not, for a long while, be as gay and light-hearted as of old, he will eventually recover his bouyant spirits, and be the same dear son and brother. If, as we believe, Nora is guiltless of wrong, let us trust that something may occur to prove her innocence, and then all will be well. Cheer up, little daughter. Though our sunlight is now hidden by a cloud, it will shine all the brighter when the shadows are gone."

"Bless you, dear papa. If you will only let me see you smile again, and will always love me so fondly, I can bear anything, and you shall not hear me murmur again."

"You are the angel of my life, my child, and may your sainted mother's God smile on and bless you forevermore."

The old man stroked back the brown, silken braids, and tears trembled in his eyes.

It was eleven o'clock. The bright full moon had reached the zenith and was riding, high and clear, in the cloudless skies. A thousand stars, glimmering in the bespangled vault of heaven, were mirrored in the quiet lake, that all unruffled slept below; whilst the great, broad valleys, dotted over with farm-houses and neat white cottages, were bathed in a silvery radiance. The tall trees cast fanciful shadows on the lawn, and the yellow leaves grew golden in the moonbeam.

In her bedroom, at a window that overlooked this

moonlit scene, stood Jeannette Evarts. Her face was turned towards this lovely picture, but she scarcely saw its beauties; for her mind's eye was looking through the confusion of present realities into the vista of the past, and her thoughts were engaged with the memories of other days, that now glided before her vision like a beautiful dream. And then she dwelt again on the present; and then she peered into the future, to see what joys the angel-hands held out to beckon her on. She thought of Henry Melton — of the time when they had played together on that very moonlit lawn that lay before her — thought of the woodbine bower, and the big moss rock by the gurgling brook, and in memory heard again the little bird's love-ditty: thought of the rose arbor in the garden, where on a night just like this he sat by her side, and they together watched the same glorious orb that now smiled so sweetly above her: and — her heart swelled with the happy memories until a tear stole into the mild blue eye, and —

"Oh, God, let not my brightest dreamings fade in darkness."

The door softly opened and a whispering voice said:

"Is Miss Jeannette asleep?"

"No, Mary, I am not asleep. But why have you come? I told you I should not need your services any further to-night, and I thought you had retired hours ago."

"Please excuse me for disturbing you, Miss Jeannette. I have a letter for you. Casper was much later to-night with the mail than usual, and I had to await his coming, to see your father's papers delivered to him.

When I handed him the letters, he gave me this for you; but, supposing that you were asleep, bade me not disturb you to-night, but keep it until the morning. I knew the handwriting, and thinking you would be glad to get it, I bethought me to steal quietly here, and had you been asleep I should not have broken your slumbers."

"You are very kind and faithful, Mary."

The girl withdrew with a good-night, and closing the door after her, Jeannette was again alone.

"BOSTON, MASS., NOV.— 1874.

"JEANNETTE:—I am about to write to you, for several reasons. It gives me pleasure to linger o'er the pictures of joy that memory holds forth, and to dwell on the sweet promises that hope blends with your name. I love to think of you, and in our separation to let our spirits commune through the medium of blessed letters. Another reason is, I believe you will be pleased to get this token of my love, and to see how ever-present you are to my thoughts, as well as how firmly fixed on my best affections. My chief reason, however, Jeannette, is this: I wished to express to you my sympathy—my deep and heart-felt sympathy in all your troubles, the tidings of which were communicated to me in a letter from my father, received yesterday. I know that my little darling is sad, and to say that I share her sadness and am unhappy, would be superfluous. My feelings are too closely allied to your own, Jeannette, that you could suffer and I be exempt.

"I feel that you are a part of my very being, and whatever affects your happiness must necessarily produce a like change upon mine own. When I heard of the sad and bitter — apparent — termination of the cherished hopes of dear Horace, my heart was stricken with a grief scarcely second to your father's and your own; and, while I knew of the anguish that wrung his soul, my own was made to suffer more acutely by the knowledge that I was powerless to serve him. When I heard of his absence from you all, I was more than half-decided to quit my studies and go in quest of him; and I was only deterred by the consideration that he might probably return home even before I could find a trace of him.

"I am not sufficiently acquainted with the exact nature of your grief, to offer you any words of encouragement or comfort. But you may be certain of one thing—whatever troubles may hang over Myrtle Lawn, from my heart I condole them. And if the assurance of my confidence unshaken in the integrity and purity of Nora Lavine, and my steadfast belief that the poor girl has been foully and cruelly slandered through the machinations of that traitorous, cowardly villain — MacKenzie: if the assertion of my unchanging friendship for Horace — a friendship which no time or fortune can ever shake: of my deep respect, reverence and sympathy for your dear, noble old father: of my unfaltering, undying love for you, my angel Jeannette — a love deep-rooted in the soul, inseparable from my dreams of happiness — be any balm to your wounded spirit, apply it, Jeannette; for here, in the

solitude of my room, afar from you, unmoved by passion, and with a spirit calm, cool and deliberate, I swear to you that my love for you, darling, is all that you would wish it; and that my purest sympathies are with you all at Myrtle Lawn and Elmwood. If there be any chance for me to serve you or your father, or dear Horace, or the unhappy ones at Elmwood, you have but to let me know, and nothing shall detain me. I can not, however, believe otherwise than that Horace will very soon return to you all, and that the skies will all become unclouded again.

"It will probably be several months before I shall see you: before I shall again be gladdened by that bright face, or hear the sweet voice which is by far the dearest music my heart has ever known. But absence cannot affect my love, Jeannette. I shall linger each day on the sweet memories of the past and the blessed promises of the future; and, though far from your side I shall love you just as devotedly as if I held that little hand in mine, and felt the warm light of your dear, loving eyes beaming on me. Jeannette will be faithful, too: will love me always, will you not, darling? Your spirit whispers its gentle answer to my spirit, my Jeannette. I hear its soothing voice in my midnight dreamings. I hear it when the early morn grows bright; and when the shades of twilight are gathering about me, I feel a tender, silent influence and I know from whence it comes.

"For the present, Jeannette, I bid you good-by. You must write to me, darling, and be not reserved; for are not our hearts as united as if the marriage

ceremony had already been performed? In conclusion, I would repeat that I am happy in your love, and would say, that if any thing had been wanting to perfect my admiration for the angelic purity and beauty of your character—if any thing had been wanting to strengthen my confidence in your constancy and devotion—it would have been furnished in the example of your noble fidelity to poor slandered Nora, under the most trying circumstances, when every one else had abandoned her to misery and reproach.

"HENRY MELTON."

The moon went down in the west. The stars faded from the sky. The dew sparkled on the meadow. The plowman's whistle was heard in the field. The great red sun was climbing in the east, and a stray, golden ray stole through the latticed window and gilded a silken curl. Yet Jeannette Evarts slept on; and, though a pearly tear-drop glistened on the closed lid, sweet smiles were wreathing the cherry lips, and a pretty dimple played with the rose blush on the cheek. Jeannette was happy, for tender visions moved before her dreaming fancy, that Henry was by her side.

CHAPTER XIV.

TRUST AND HOPE.

AS spring is to external nature, so is youth to human life. We see the meadows carpeted with velvety hues; the trees robed in green foliage, and the flowers blooming by the hedgeway. The air is then laden with the richest odors, and the birds are singing in the shrubbery. Lambs frisk and gambol on the hill-side, and brooklets sparkle in the valleys. Nature wears her gayest smiles, and the world looks as fresh and beautiful as if just issued from the great Creator's hand. All is peace, and Love and Harmony —two holy handmaids, move among the flowers.

Youth furnishes the synonym. The heart, honest and guileless, is glad, buoyant and happy. The rich blood goes bounding through the veins, and bright hopes burn high. Ambition stands by the student's side and points him to the gilded pinnacle. Sweet day-dreams lull the lover to rest in the flowery dell, and he has visions of Paradise, and is wandering in the fairy-land with the loved one at his heart.

We have known, however, the leaflets to bud too soon; the violets in the valley to be cut down by the biting frost, and the rose leaves to lose their fragrance on the chilling winds. Then the meadows grow dark again, and the music of singing birds is hushed to silence. We have likewise known the chill of sorrow to come over

the young heart: its buds of promise to wither in the blasts of disappointment; its holiest hopes to be crushed in their bloom, and the cup of joy, ready raised to the lips, to be turned to poison. We have seen cruel despair take the place of sweet promise; the fount of joy grow dry, and the cup of bitterness substituted for that of intoxicating bliss. Is there any picture half so replete with sadness? The heart and hope of youth crushed — a deep, dark cloud of gloom and sorrow shrouding it up when all should be sunlight and happiness! To see it one day speaking through the sparkling eye and rosy cheek, its loves, its joys, its hopes: the next, despairing, lone; with no responsive echo to the voice of the happy world; no seraph-notes to whisper "hope;" no bright star glimmering on the distant horizon to shed a ray!

It is not so much the convulsions in the social or political status of nations; the falling away into decay and ruin of earth's proudest cities; the uncertain stability of monarch's thrones, or the crumbling into dust of the monuments that were erected to stand through the ages of the coming time — that impress with sadness and sorrow the thinking mind half so much as the positive uncertainty of human hope, and the sad vicissitudes in human affections! Revolutions in governments are productive, oftentimes, of saving results. From the thrones of monarchs often emanate cruel decrees of tyranny and oppression. Monuments are miniature Babel-towers. Fallen cities may be re-built; but by what process can the altar of the heart be re-erected when its pillars are broken — when hope

is dead, and the garlands of love lay wilted in the burning tears of misery?

These thoughts occurred to us as we looked upon the wasted form, the pallid cheek and the sunken eye of poor Nora Lavine, as she sat one evening, silent and listless, in the little vine-covered portico of Elmwood Cottage. Her mute, sad eyes were directed away to the westward, where the god of day was sinking in billows, while his departing rays gave a silver lining to the huge fragments of clouds that were piled up against the horizon. The picture was sublime, but Nora's colorless face expressed no feeling of admiration or pleasure. Despair — blank, cruel despair — was written on every feature. The cheek was pale; the brow was cold; light had faded from the eye and hope from the heart. The scenes that once excited her wonder or inspired her song, or

> "Soothed each gust of passion unto peace,
> All but the swellings of the softened heart
> That awaken not, disturb the tranquil mind,"

had lost their charm. The mellow moonlight, the stars of night, the god of day — "his gorgeous coming and his setting indescribable," — the music of the wildwoods and the smiles of Nature, only furnished to her mind a painful contrast to the gloom that was within, or were lost upon her in the contemplation of the shame and misery that, canker-like, were corroding the heart.

And yet she would not, *could not* weep. From the moment the fever left her burning brain, and she awoke to a consciousness of her real situation, a dull apathy

fixed itself upon her, and the fount of tears was dried up. She scarcely murmured, and as seldom did she smile. When she did, it was to please her mother, and in this it failed, for it seemed less like an expression of pleasure than a flitting ray of sunlight o'er the face of death. Nora hardly ever spoke unless addressed; and even then she was often absent and silent. Her every movement was mechanical, and she appeared to take no interest whatever in passing objects and events.

The sun went down and the shadows hung o'er the valley. Still Nora sat in the portico, gazing westward, silent and motionless.

"Nora, my child, are you still out here in the night air? You should not expose yourself at such an hour. The evening shades are falling, and they bring the chilling dew. You forget that you are just recovering from a severe and dangerous illness, and that a relapse now, would in all probability carry you to—"

"Relief, my mother. Death has no terrors for me. It is only the happy who fear to die. *They* have love in their hearts, and hope in their lives. The world looks bright and beautiful to them, and the ties that bind them to earth are strong. The shadows of the grave seem dark, and they dread to cut loose the silken cords that bind them here, and to bid an eternal farewell to the gladsome sunlight. The wretched have nothing to fear. Death to them is rather a relief from the miseries here, and the darkness of the tomb is not more gloomy than that they leave behind them. I long, aye, long to die."

"Cease, my darling child. I am grieved to hear you

speak so. It is not only unwise, but it is wicked to wish for premature death. It is opposing your will to that of the Divinity. God, in his wisdom, placed us, each one, here for a purpose, and we must fulfill our mission. When we wish to die ere He wills it, we show a want of moral firmness and courage to meet the responsibilities of life, and a lack of Christian grace to bear up under the afflictions which God, for some wise end, sees fit to visit upon us. You must cheer up, my dear, darling child, and look to Him."

"Oh, mother, I *cannot* cheer up. My sorrow overwhelms me. What have I to live for? My hopes have been all sapped, "name blighted, heart riven, and life's life lied away." I am a being apart from my sex—separate and distinct. I am shut out from the beautiful world, and a dark cloud rests upon me; a cloud that has no silver lining behind its awful blackness. I am shunned by all—all; and my name is not whispered in holy places, lest its sound should bring taint and evil. It is a shame to virtue, for none believe in my innocence."

"You forget, Nora. I know your purity, and Jeannette Evarts has clung to you with an abiding, unshaken faith, and with more than a sister's love. You have reason to be unhappy, my child, but you are not *all* forsaken; and there is a holy consciousness within that should whisper, peace. No matter *what* may happen, I shall *always* love you, my child. Let then your home, my Nora, be in your mother's heart. You must live for *me*, and live for *God*. Put your trust in *Him*, my child, and if you are but true to

yourself, true to *Him*, He will bless you as sure as the heavens are above the earth. *Trust Him*, and just so sure as the coming of the morrow's sunlight, will lift the darkness from the face of yon valley, He will drive the clouds from your pathway. And though the night of sorrow may seem dark and starless and unending, yet the dawn will come. It *will* come in his good time, and it will bring light and gladness, and joy and peace to the now bleeding heart. *Pray*, Nora: pray for strength and faith."

"Oh! mother, I will try to pray; will try to trust and believe. Help me, mother. Help me to pray."

That night Nora Lavine struggled and prayed; and when the old town clock struck the midnight hour, she still, on bended knee, in the silence and darkness of her room, wrestled with the spirit. In an hour afterwards she arose; and, while her face and bosom were bathed in holy tears, there was a quiet smile on the lip, and hope in the heart. And when the eyes were closed, and the long lashes swept the pillow, sweet slumbers stole upon her; and there was an angel-watcher by her side, for a bright, lone star glimmered through the parted curtains, and its beams rested on her bosom.

CHAPTER XV.

INTEREST OBSTRUCTING LOVE.

EDWIN MELTON sat in his office in Baltimore. He had been engaged examining into the state of his affairs. His inspection proved that his business was all that he could wish. Gold was pouring into his already glutted coffers, and he was not only one of the very wealthiest men in Baltimore, but in all the business circles of the country. He prided himself on his credit and his money — not so much for their sakes alone, as for the fact that gold was the basis of popular favor; and he wanted influence with his fellow man. His son must climb up, and from the top round of the ladder hand down to posterity a name made illustrious. What instrument or agency would facilitate his efforts so much as gold?

The path to fame is comparatively easy when strewn with the shining ore; but poverty must climb over many a sharp and jagged cliff ere it attains any honorable height, and Edwin Melton knew it.

Every thing had been working admirably, and was going on to his entire satisfaction and, for several weeks, he had been unusually complaisant. He did not doubt but that since the occurrences at Elmwood and Myrtle Lawn, his son had relinquished all thought of making Jeannette Evarts his wife; and therefore saw no obstacle in the way of uniting his house with

that of Senator Glennmore. He had more than once hinted this scheme to that gentleman, and it was evidently entertained with pleasure. The idea scarcely occurred to Edwin Melton, that he would find any difficulty in getting his son to conform to his wishes after all memory of what he was pleased to term "his boyish passion," had been effaced from his heart. Forsooth, how *could he* object to such an arrangement?

Ellen Glennmore was young, amiable, pretty, and highly accomplished; and had had the honor of refusing half a score of suitors, some of whom were among the most handsome and talented men in the country. That she was partial to young Henry, there could be no doubt; for, although they had not met over frequently, she had evidently shown a preference for him, and there was a warmer lustre in her dark eyes, and her smiles were softer when he was at her side.

"In a little more than two months now," said the old merchant to himself, "Henry will be at home again. By that time his views will no doubt coincide with mine in this matter. I will manage to throw him into the society of Miss Glennmore as much as possible, and to keep him away from Myrtle Lawn. When his mind is cool and dispassionate, he can not fail to see the advantages to be derived from this alliance I have in view, and with this prejudice in her favor, he will not be able to resist her charms."

Some such thoughts as these were occupying Edwin Melton's mind, when a letter with the postmark Boston, was handed to him. He opened it, but before he

read it through his face grew pale, and he was almost speechless from anger and astonishment. Again and again he read:

"In this, my father, I can never comply with your wishes. My happiness is not alone involved. I have the hopes and happiness of another in my keeping, and the trust is a sacred one. I could not violate it if even thereby I incurred your everlasting displeasure."

The elder Melton had too much character and too much sound sense to allow himself to be long under the control of such a feeling as anger. With scarce a seeming effort he suppressed his wrath, and in a few minutes his face was as calm as if no storm had ever passed over it. An hour afterwards he was seated in his carriage speeding homeward. On his way thither he revolved in his mind many plans of action, but none of them exactly suited him, and he finally came to the conclusion that the best policy would be to wait, and trust to future circumstances, fully determined, however, in his mind that *Jeannette Evarts should never be the wife of Henry Melton while he, the father, lived.*

* * * * * *

Now come the bleak, whistling winds, and the drifting snows of cheerless winter. The leafless branches of the tall, old maples in the forest by the stream, stand out coldly against the horizon. The meadows have lost their verdure; the vines and the flowers of Myrtle Lawn and Elmwood have shed their fragrance and their beauty, as if they were in sympathy with the broken hopes of the fair ones there.

We no longer listen to the cheery music of spring, or of the harvest time; and our evenings instead of being passed in pleasant wanderings through lovely promenades, are spent in the closed rooms with drawn shutters, by the glowing grate. Yet the beautiful City of Monuments is full of music, mirth and gayety. It is the festive season there. Countless figures of grace and beauty whirl through the enravishing dance. Hundreds of thoughtless and happy hearts swell under the influence of enrapturing music. Theatres are crowded with excited pleasure seekers. Homes are full of warmth and comfort, of luxury and loving hearts.

Nora Lavine listens to the merry jingle of sleigh-bells. We wonder if she thinks it a pity that the spotless purity of the driven snow should be sullied by the hoofs of the prancing horses! Does she look to the grand, pretentious, but cold monuments that so far overtop the beautiful city? We wonder if they suggest to her mind a thought of man's charity! It may be so.

So the days go on. Nora seldom goes out from the walls of her cottage home. She listens to the merry jingle of the sleigh bells, and they tell her there are happy hearts out beyond Elmwood, but there are no sleigh bells within. Yet she is *not* wretched; for she believes that God is the Lord, and feels that He will right her wrongs, and this faith sees the light through the darkness.

The days go on, and the shadow that rests on Myrtle Lawn grows darker, for weeks and months have passed

since the beloved son, and the idolized brother quitted his place in the dear little circle. The vacant place had caused anxious thought; and the doting old father, and the tender sister had looked at the empty chair by their side, and had looked at each other, and been silent. Still no tidings came. The vacant place had been watered in tears, and we wonder if Horace Evarts will ever come back. We wonder if the empty chair will ever be filled. We wonder whether *he is dead.*

At last, about midwinter, a letter in his hand-writing arrives. Is it a stifled little shout of joy that we hear as Jeannette Evarts sees the superscription? Why is the old father's face so pale; and why is his eyesight almost lost in the gushing tears as his tremulous fingers break the seal? News, at last, of the long absent loved one! He is not dead. He said he was well. He did not say his heart was broken by the miserable events of that memorable Sabbath morning at Elmwood. But *we* know from his conduct immediately afterwards, and from his long continued absence, and from his letter too — though he tried to write cheerfully — that he was well-nigh crushed.

Horace kept no note of the passing time as he wandered half-frenzied by the cruel shock. From town to town, from city to city, from country to country he went, with no thought but to fly from the miserable spectre that relentlessly pursued him. Still he went. Away across the broad Atlantic — no object in view; no purpose; no hope but to forget. At last, somewhat broken in health, and his means almost exhausted, he

found himself in the southern part of Spain, on the coast of the Mediterranean, in the province of Andalusia: — that paradise of the kingdom, where perennial spring seems to reign; where the skies are softer, and the air balmier than in most other parts of the earth, and where the people say a day was never known in which the sun refused to shine upon their land. There, in that glorious land — in the cities by the sea — in the still beautiful, once magnificent, Seville, Horace found some rest, some forgetfulness. Thence it was that his letter had been sent. It was full of the tenderest affection. He told how he had thought of them every hour since he left them; that he was dying to see them, and how he prayed that they might be happy: begged them not to be unhappy about him: and that although he could not return just yet, the time would come, before many months, when he would be with them again.

* * * * * *

So the shadow on Myrtle Lawn rested more lightly, for Horace Evarts was *not* dead. He was well. He was sound in body and mind, and he loved them as he had always loved them, and said he would come again; and hope gilded the promise, and the doting father and the loving sister looked at each other, and felt that the empty chair would not be empty long, and they wept tears of joy and relief. So the cloud had a silver lining, and thus the winter days went on. Jeannette and Henry continued to love each other with all the fervor and purity of their noble minds; and they wrote to each other from time to time, and

there was nothing to mar their happiness except this shadow on Myrtle Lawn, and the cloud that rested on Henry's mind which Jeannette did not see — the secret knowledge of a proud, unyielding father's disapprobation of his love. But they were young, and youth is full of hope. So hope would not let the shadow rest too heavily, and youth had few misgivings. The winter days were not very tedious. And Jeannette told Nora Lavinė about the letter from Seville. But she said little, and kept close to her cottage home during those winter days, and the snows continued to fall, and the sleigh bells to jingle, and they told her there were happy hearts outside of Elmwood, and somehow her own heart was lighter, for Horace Evarts was *not* dead, though she had no hope in her love for him.

Edwin Melton continued his visits to the city, though they were not so frequent during the winter days; and always came back with a dignified and self-satisfied air, and well he might, for all his affairs were highly prosperous, and this rich man continued to stand among the very first on the list of wealth and influence in the mercantile world. There was no serious shadow on his way, for his pride lifted him above and his will swept trifles out of his way. He seldom wrote, but often received letters from his son. No allusion whatever (by his own positive directions) was ever made in any of these letters to the *affaire du cœur* of young Henry. The final and emphatic law had been laid down in the last letter but one which the old merchant had written, and it read somewhat after this style:

"As to your foolish and thoughtless affair with Miss Evarts, I tell you once again and finally, my son, that you had as well forget it. If you can not — you say you can not — conquer a boyish passion when there is no reason in it, you are not, and never will be, fit to fill any high station in Life. But I know you can subdue it, and I tell you I will *never* listen to the fulfillment of any such matrimonial engagement.

"From your very infancy I have toiled and labored for you. I have idolized you, and in you have been centered all my fondest, dearest hopes of earth. Yet *if you persist in carrying out this insane intention of yours, you are no longer a son of mine, and must rely on your own resources for a livelihood.*

"I do not trouble myself much, however, about the matter, for I have hardly a doubt but that your eyes will soon be opened, and that you will see the folly of your blind infatuation. In any event I wish you never to mention the subject again to me in any of your letters, but go on in the diligent prosecution of your studies; do as you know I wish you to do, and you will be the pride and the joy of my life, while your reward will be found in the results of my life-long labor and the blessings of an old father's heart."

So the winter passed.

CHAPTER XVI.

FORESHADOWINGS OF FATE.

THE lowering clouds of smoke from the machine shops and manufactories no longer draped our pretty village in shadows, but were wafted away by gentle zephyrs and lost to sight in the cloudless skies. The dense fogs were lifted from the valley; streams again sparkled in sunlight; fish sported in the limpid wave; birds built their nests in the arbor, and the wild lark, on swift wings, with cheerful note greeted the happy spring. The plow-boy went to his work with a jolly air. The farmer merrily sang as he sowed his seed, and the heart of man, like the face of Nature, awoke to new life, new hope, new energy. The old man's face was lit up with a pleasant light, as he looked back on the halcyon days of his own heart's spring, and his soul grew glad in the bright retrospect. The young were happy, aye, jubilant and joyous, for the season was symbolic of their own spring-time of life. They looked upon the bursting buds, and thought how soon they would bloom in sweet luxuriance and beauty: then turning to the heart, they watched the buds of promise there, and looked longingly forward into the future, when there, too, would bloom in the full fruition of hope and happiness.

The cares and sorrows of the heavy heart were softened: the love and joys of the light were enhanced,

and the heart of man beat in unison and harmony with the great, swelling, throbbing heart of Nature.

Myrtle Lawn was unchanged—just as we saw it one year before, when Jeannette Evarts was standing at the open window, looking out on the bright lake and the beautiful landscape beyond—the same sweet Elysium, where innocence loved to make her home. There was the little seat under the arbor in the garden, where Jeannette and Henry sat in the moonlight. There the same lovely flowers, the same clustering vines. There, the pretty greenwood in the background, with the crystal lake in its bosom. The glassy surface reflected, as then, the drooping lilies that grew from its bank; there, above it, towered the same old poplar as venerable as ever, looking down, as it were the guardian of its purity. The woodbine bower, near by, had shaken off the icy hand of winter, and on that April morning, was smiling in all its vernal freshness. The down on the moss rock was as silky, the merry rivulet at its base danced as gleefully on to its ocean as when it made music to the loves of two fond beings, on that bright morning when the pretty bird sang his approving notes, as Jeannette Evarts nestled her little head next the warm heart that loved her best in all this world.

Had they forgotten this lovely spot and its happy associations? Far from it. Again they sat there on this, another spring morning, and smiles were on their faces and smiles were in their hearts. As they looked out on the world around them, they saw and felt that God above was also smiling in all his works beneath. Henry and Jeannette were also silent,

Silent? Aye, fair reader, and would you know the cause? Find your answer in the query—"Do you not remember some period in your own past life, some moment of beatitude, when the heart was too full for aught but silence? When nothing could enhance, but a word or sound might break the ecstatic spell?"

We hope you have. Such seasons are the green spots on the arid desert—the oases on the barren waste of human life. They visit us seldom, but they do come, in time, to almost every immortal soul, and are given by God to man as a foretaste of heaven. Jeannette Evarts was *happy*. She thought not just then of the shadow that had fallen on the beauty of her home: she heeded not just then the low mutter of a storm that hung down low on the horizon: she saw not the cloud that veiled her future. She lived in the Present.

Looking up into the fond eyes that were gazing down into hers, she only knew that the star of love was beaming on her, and, with a pure but impassioned soul, she was dazzled by its brilliancy. As the earth beneath reflects the light of the heavens above, and these combined reflect the great Creator's smile, so did her face, resplendent with beauty and love, reflect the glory of the soul within. There they sat, hand in hand, their souls in silent communion, commingling. *He*, the strong man of intellect, eager to meet and ready to solve mysterious problems; tenderly watching and adoring; bending the knee at the shrine of innocence and beauty, recognizing his love as the ruling passion of his life and the sway of his soul; willing, if called upon, to set aside every other consideration—pride,

ambition, fame; yea, every thing, for the object of his adoration, bent to his idol. *She*, loving, confiding; trusting him with life, honor, happiness; clinging as the tender vine to the strong oak, looked up to him and felt that he was the greatest of her earthly all.

Anon, Henry's mind took a hurried glance at the past. He saw himself again, a little, curly-haired boy sitting on his father's knee: recalled his school days, his college life, and its struggles: his happy meeting after three years absence with the loved one at his side: all the subsequent events, and dwelt on the happy memories of mutual confidence and love. And then — a shade of uneasiness and anxiety swept over his face, for the apparition of a cold, unbending father passed before his mental vision, and seemed to beckon him away from his Eden. The shadow on his features did not pass unnoticed by the loving girl at his side, for looking up tenderly into his eyes, she inquired:

"Are you not happy, dear Henry?"

"I could not be unhappy, Jeannette, when by your side, and yet I can not say I am truly and wholly happy."

"Why? do we not love each other?"

"I know that you love me, Jeannette, and the knowledge of this love brings a joy to my heart which it could never have known in this world without it. I love *you*, as the star of my hope and happiness, and my love for you is paramount to every other consideration of earth. You are my only hope of earthly felicity. Upon one issue have I built my castles. That issue is the fulfilment of our matrimonial engage-

ment. If any evil were to come between us, if aught should ever cause a separation between us, my castles would crumble, my every hope be blighted, and life made intolerably miserable. It is this that makes me tremble, and brings a momentary chill on my heart."

"Why indulge such imaginings? No evil will come between us: nothing will cause a separation. Your castle will not crumble if my truth and my love can make them firm. My loved one does not doubt my constancy."

"No, Jeannette. I would sooner doubt my own sanity than your love. Yet when I remember how entirely, during my whole life, my happiness depends upon the continuance of our mutual affection, and the fulfilment of our engagement, I cannot help being impressed with a sense of fear lest some evil agency should draw you from me. It is not that I doubt the depths of your feeling or sincerity. I know that you are all that is noble, pure, gentle and good, and you have never even dreamed of trifling with me. Still it is possible that our hopes may never be realized; and my mind can even now call up circumstances which are capable of working changes in the very best of human affections. These changes bring misery, blighted hopes, and this is death—a death of the heart, a blotting out of the prospect of happiness, a withering of love's roses, a drying up of the fount of hope."

"I cannot imagine any circumstances, dear Henry, that could work any changes in the feelings of my heart toward you."

"Are there no circumstances, Jeannette, that could shake your purpose of becoming my wife?"

"Why do you ask? I know of nothing that would influence me to withhold the hand I promised you unless it was that you had ceased to love me."

"Cease to love you! Cease to love you, my own Jeannette? This heart will for ever cease its pulsations when it loves you no more. Think again. Is there nothing that would affect your purpose?"

"It is needless to think. I am yours now, wholly and fondly, and so will I ever be until I die."

"And I am yours, heart, soul and life. Let me see, however, whether I can not present to your mind some contingences under which you would falter. Suppose that some degrading or horrible crime had been committed in the vicinity, and that circumstantial evidence fixed on me so conclusively the guilt that my best friends and even my own father believed me the criminal, what would be your course in such an event?"

"Such a case is unreasonable, for it is barely within the range of possibility. But were you placed in such a situation, I should not hesitate. I would doubt the reality of my own senses before I could believe you guilty of anything dishonorable, and should every friend you have on earth forsake you, I should cling the closer for your being left alone."

"You would still be willing to marry me?"

"I should hasten the ceremony, dearest, that I might be with you to comfort."

"Jeannette, you are an angel. But let us suppose further. What if your father were to violently oppose the consummation of our wishes?"

"My father, Henry, rather than oppose, would encourage any step that would perfect or enhance the happiness of his daughter."

"What if he thought that your happiness would be jeopardized by our union, and opposed from motives of affection?"

"I would disabuse his mind of its paradox."

"But suppose you were unable?"

"Then, Henry, I would tell him that I loved him with all my heart and would be willing to die to secure his happiness, but that my faith and love had been plighted in the sight of heaven, and that I could not falsify them. I would be true to you."

"One more case, dear, darling Jeannette, and I am done. What if my father, guided or influenced by a boundless and inconsiderate ambition — imagining that the fulfilment of certain hopes would be facilitated by uniting, through me, his house with that of a most distinguished man of the nation, had arranged for me to marry his daughter, and on this ground set himself between us; and that I, refusing to conform to his wishes, still clung to you with all the love of which my soul is capable, what would be your feelings and how would you act under those circumstances?"

"Henry, dear Henry, what is the matter? You are pale, and the hand that clasps mine is cold and tremulous."

"Nothing; what would you do, Jeannette?"

"Oh! Henry, why do you ask such strange questions? You make me so unhappy."

"What would you do, Jeannette?"

"I would love you with all my heart, just as I do now; but I could never allow myself to be forced upon him as his daughter, and would not become your wife while he lived."

"Suppose, after your rejection under the circumstances, I still fondly loved you, and refused to second the wishes of my father, or be an instrument in his hand; and for this he were to break every natural tie, and cast me out on the world penniless and alone, and I were to come to you then and ask you to share my hard fortune and my poverty, what would be your answer, Jeannette?"

"*Wealth would be poverty without your love. Poverty would be wealth if we but shared it together.*"

CHAPTER XVII.

COMPLICITIES DEEPEN.

PREVIOUS to the sad disappointment of her brother's hopes and his unhappy banishment, Jeannette Evarts had never known a sorrow. Her sympathy in her brother's misery was the only shadow that had ever dimmed the brightness of her way. She had lived in a beautiful home where her slightest wish was anticipated; surrounded by everything that was beautiful in nature and elegant in art, and fondled and caressed by a doting old father and tender brother. Had she lived under less favorable auspices she still would have been happy; for they say that the "good" are happy, and her mind and heart were as pure and as guileless as it is possible for mortal's to be. Her brother's misfortune and his continued absence from home impressed her with an intense sadness, but when she became satisfied in her mind of the purity and virtue of the object of his affections, and still later when she had received a letter from him with the assurance of his welfare, and that he would sometime return to his home, her spirits reacted, hope revived, and she felt that all will be bright again.

Jeannette loved Henry with all the strength of her pure young heart, and in the artless simplicity of her nature she did not try to conceal from him any part of the fact. When he was off at his law studies, her

thoughts were with him daily, and her heart would swell with its emotions of tenderness and love as she blushingly contemplated the future prospect. At the appointed time he had returned master of the profession he had chosen, and having realized the high hopes of his proud father and numerous friends.

During a fortnight or more he had spent quite all his leisure hours at the Lawn, and though there was one serious drawback to his happiness, and one serious cause of unhappiness to Jeannette in the absence of her brother and the attendant circumstances, yet, when seated together in the beautiful arbor of flowers, or in the quiet parlor, or promenading the walks of the Lawn at the soft hour of twilight, or wandering in the greenwood by the lake they forgot everything else but their love for one another, and were just as happy as two hearts could be. Often, however, when alone after one of these seasons of love and happiness a cloud would oppress the young man's heart, for he could not forget the letter his father had written him while in Boston, in which were the words: "If you persist in carrying out your insane intention, you are no longer a son of mine, but must rely on your own resources for a livelihood."

Henry Melton knew his father's unbending nature and the steadfastness of his purposes when he had once fully determined. The ominous words haunted him in his dreams, and rested like a nightmare upon his breast. It was not so much for the loss of fortune with which he was threatened that he cared. This was comparatively nothing to Jeannette's love. What he feared

and dreaded most was the effect which a knowledge of this opposition on his father's part would have upon her. Would not her pride and delicacy naturally revolt against their union under the circumstances? He could not doubt it, notwithstanding he knew that she loved him with her whole heart; besides this, he had scruples of his own about asking her to become his wife in case his father continued inflexible. If the threat of disinheritance were carried into execution, he would, in case of his marriage, be forced to live, at least for a while, as a dependant at Myrtle Lawn. Or he must take her away from her doting old father and beautiful home to share with him his struggles against poverty and want among strangers. Would this be right? Would this be honorable? He doubted it. Before he had returned from Boston he had fondly hoped that his father would relent, and if he could not approve, might at least consent to his marriage with Jeannette. Shortly after his arrival at home he ventured one morning to hint something of the subject next his heart.

The rebuff he met with was so positive and determined, that he was glad to change the conversation, and shrank from further allusion, with an undefinable dread of bringing on a catastrophe which he now felt must, yet hoped would not occur. Henry Melton knew not what to do. He felt it to be a sacred duty he owed to Jeannette, to let her know of his father's opposition, but he well knew this unexpected intelligence would mortify and grieve her gentle spirit, and how could he do it? His anxiety and perplexity daily increased

until at last he resolved that he would tell her all. With this determination he sought her on the beautiful spring morning we last saw them together, and led her to the moss rock near the lake where he had first told her of his love. When he sat there, however, with her hand in his, surrounded by influences which he had not the power to resist, he gave loose reins to happy feelings, and forgot for a while the delicate and unhappy, yet honorable object for which he had sought the interview. Even when the subject did force itself upon him, he could not summon quite enough moral firmness to tell her all, but compromised the matter by giving her vague hints, which he felt would prepare her mind for the fuller disclosure which he intended should be made on their next meeting. In the excitement produced on her mind, and the embarrassment occasioned by the strangeness of his questions, she did not understand the motive that prompted the inquiries; nor did she at the time have a clearly defined suspicion that they bore any particular significance. Afterwards, however, when he had left her, and she was alone in her room thinking of the conversation they had just held, her suspicions began to awaken, and the more she pondered the subject the more confirmed became her perplexity and distress. Jeannette Evarts coupled the agitation of her lover with her knowledge of his father's character, and a sensation of fear and trembling seized upon her, and for the first time since she had given her heart and pledged her hand to Henry Melton she realized the possibility of a separation and a broken heart. A

change came stealing o'er the spirit of her dream. A cloud was lowering over her way.

Thus far we have seen but one side of Jeannette's character. We have seen her as a pure, unassuming, warm, joyous child of impulse. Without deception or artifice, we know her as credulous and confiding. We have been with her in her happy home, and seen her almost secluded from society, and therefore free from the influence of its frivolous gayeties. She had comparatively few acquaintances; for, unlike most other young girls of her age in wealth and station, she had never been sent off to the fashionable boarding schools of the day, and had spent little of her time in the great city, whose spires were almost within sight of her home. If she knew little of those polite nothings, the vain coquetries, silly ceremonies, and idle flirtations that so often characterize the fashionable habitué of city society, she knew less of its jealousies, its intrigues and its heart burnings. Her soul was expanded and her mind ennobled though she had scarce an instructress save Nature, and no guide but the dictates of her own pure soul.

Surrounded by all that was lovely and pure, her young life flowed gently and joyously, she growing up the while like some beautiful wild flower blooming in rich luxuriance beneath a southern cline. Her manner, so unstudied, was generally thoughtless but graceful, easy and happy; for she acted from the impulse of a heart that was all purity, love and lightness. And yet beneath the surface of her life there was a profound undercurrent of sensibility and feeling; a woman's

soul that was full of heroism, a heart that was capable of enduring and suffering, and ready to meet misfortune with calm dignity and strength, and to combat sorrow with meekness and faith. Jeannette was as good as she was beautiful, and her beauty would have done justice to the poet's dream.

When the first cloud began to darken the future horizon and cast their sombre shadows on her coming life, she gave not way to outbursts of passionate grief, but listening calmly to the low mutterings of the distant storm, and looking away beyond the darkness to the Divine light above, buckled on her shield—faith, and awaited quietly its coming. This faith in her life was beautiful. It was not the result of study; it was the prime essence of her being, and was by choice a part of after education. Theology with her was not scholastic, revealed or speculative. It was natural. She was taught the truth by her goddess Nature, and she saw the wisdom of the Omnipotent in the beauty of his works, and witnessed his goodness in his smiles on his creatures. Her virtue and her faith were Orthodox, and yet, though she delighted to obey the divine injunction "Search the scriptures," her faith was not the result of those researches, for before she was able to comprehend the "great plan," she had learned the beautiful lesson in the open book of Nature, and the truth was only confirmed, not awakened by scriptural revelations.

Next to this faith which was the ruling principle of her soul, and the covenant that bound her to her God, was her love for Henry Melton. The one was the

medium of eternal bliss; the other of all earthly hopes and happiness. It dated its existence back to the very days of her childhood. The bud that had its incipient blush in the first bloom of girlhood, had expanded and blown into a beautiful flower which shed a sweet fragrance and a hallowed influence over life. We have watched the serene beauty and loveliness of her character, and we have seen the brightness of young love's dream undimmed by a shadow until doubt and misgiving were awakened in her mind by that ominous conversation with her lover. That conversation she felt to be the harbinger of misfortune; but, while she saw the shadow of the coming evil she resolved to be firm, nor did she give way to useless repinings or bitter grief; but Hope sustained by Faith —Faith seeing through the darkness buoyed up the sinking heart and cast a gleam amid the gloom.

Henry Melton's mind was to some extent relieved by his conversation with Jeannette. He had prepared her to receive as an unhappy fact that which he had merely hinted at as a possibility. He had held up to her view contingencies under which the most ardent attachments would be likely to falter, and he had heard from her own lips that she would be firm and constant. And while he deplored bitterly the untoward circumstances which were likely to put that heroism to the test, he felt great comfort in the blessed assurance that she would be faithful, and that no time or change of fortune could affect her love for him. Every thought and feeling were almost forgotten in this happy reflection. It is true that his heart bled with bitter sorrow at the

estrangement which threatened to exist between his father and himself, and he determined to use every method and means he could devise to avert it. As to the loss of pecuniary means which he felt would certainly follow this prospective estrangement, he was not so much concerned from selfish considerations as he was on Jeannette's account. He had heard since his return from Boston that the pecuniary affairs of Mr. Evarts were in a critical condition, and he would now doubly deplore his own loss of means since it would deprive him of the power to relieve the embarrassments of his dear old friend. As yet Henry had not entirely despaired of gaining his father's consent to his marriage. Combining his knowledge of his determined character with his remembrance of what had already passed, he hardly hoped ever to obtain his approval, and yet when he thought of his being an only child; that his happiness must naturally be to his father the next dearest object in life to his own; that he had always been dutiful, and had never, except in this one particular, attempted to thwart a single wish of his father's; that in him were centered all his ambitious hopes, and that an estrangement would effectually end these hopes — he could not quite believe that his father would madly persevere in a course which would not only deprive him of an only son, but would blight that son's happiness for all time to come. Henry prepared his mind for the worst, and resolved on putting an end to his miserable suspense by having an immediate interview with his father, which should be conclusive and final.

Firmly fixed in this purpose he reached the mansion about noon, after leaving Jeannette on the occasion of his last conversation with her, and with a heart full of anxiety, he sought his father. Instead of finding him, however, he was met by a servant of the establishment who handed him a letter, in the superscription of which he immediately recognized his father's handwriting. With a good deal of surprise manifest in the tone of his voice he hurriedly inquired:

"Why, what does this mean, William? This letter is from my father. Is he not at home?"

"No sir. He sent for you here about the middle of the forenoon not knowing that you had gone out, and when he found that you were nowhere about home he seemed surprised and troubled. A short while afterwards he rang for me and handed me this letter, directing me to place it in your hands myself, immediately on your return. In a few minutes, having ordered his carriage, he was driven off towards the city."

Henry Melton opened the letter and read:

"My son, I am called off on business to New York to-day, and will not be back sooner than the day after to-morrow. I intended seeing you this morning but you unexpectedly absented yourself, and I can not await you. I received a note from the Hon. William Glennmore late last evening, in which he informs me that he is about to go on a little pleasure trip with his family and one or two select friends. His route, I believe, is down the Potomac to Acquia Creek, and

thence through certain historic portions of Virginia. He expects to spend a few days in Richmond and will return to Washington after passing through the valley of the Shenandoah. He does you the marked honor of sending with his compliments an invitation to you to join him and his pleasure party. Of course you will go, and cannot fail to appreciate the distinguished honor he has conferred upon you. I can safely venture to say that you are the only young man of your age who has been the recipient of such favor at the hands of Mr. Glennmore, and I have no doubt you will deport yourself in a manner becoming the occasion and the circumstances. I can but esteem it as most highly fortunate that the opportunity has been so soon afforded you of bringing yourself in such an auspicious manner under the almost immediate notice of President Grant. I say of the President, for it is unreasonable to suppose that in this age of gossip the affair can pass without its being spoken of in his hearing. You will see then the importance of making a favorable impression, and I do not doubt that your demeanor will be such as to enhance the already high opinion which the Hon. Mr. Glennmore and others even now entertain of your moral and intellectual worth. You are expected to be at Glennmore Place by ten o'clock in the morning, soon after which hour the party will proceed on their tour of pleasure. I need hardly wish you a pleasant and profitable time. You cannot fail to make such of the trip. I do not know how long you will be gone, and being ignorant of the state of your finances, I enclose you a bank check for five hundred

dollars, which if you find insufficient to meet your requirements can be increased to any amount you may desire by draft on my House in the city.

"Your father,

"E. MELTON."

Henry found himself still further embarrassed. At almost any other time, and under ordinary circumstances the invitation would have been received with pride and accepted with much pleasure. As it was he knew that in his present state of mind he could not enjoy himself away from Jeannette, and while he felt compelled to respond to the invitation he was really sorry it had been sent. The thought of being separated even for a short time from Jeannette just then was in itself a sufficient cause of unhappiness, but in addition to this he felt that his father's letter had dispelled almost the last vestige of hope which he had entertained of his ever relenting or consenting to his marriage with Jeannette. He was very unhappy, but he was equally self-possessed.

Having decided on going, he proceeded to make all necessary preparations for the visit, and resolved to submit patiently to the unavoidable delay in the proposed interview with his father. That interview he now more than ever dreaded, but was fully determined to carry out his intentions immediately on his return home, and let the consequences be what they might, he would meet them with firmness and decision. Though he was to start very early next morning he felt he could not leave without again seeing Jeannette and unfolding to her the real situation of affairs.

He had business which kept him closely engaged until about twilight; but when at that hour he repaired to Myrtle Lawn, his unhappy condition of mind was intensified by being informed that Jeannette was indisposed and had retired to her room. He retraced his steps to Melton Mansion, and after writing a long letter to Jeannette in which he told her all, retired to his room and to bed, but his mind was so agitated by conflicting doubts, hopes and fears that it was long past the "noon of night" when sleep visited his restless pillow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNWELCOME LETTER.

THE April evening was all that beautiful spring could make it. The sun was sinking in the west, but his rays still flooded the lake with a golden light, and the bright waters gleamed through the dark foliage of woodbine and honeysuckle and nourished on the grassy bank, the water-lilies and roses.

Birds perched in the leafy boughs of tall trees and flowery shrubs, caroled their sweetest notes; flocks grazed on the gentle hill-slopes or green meadows; bells jingled on the quiet air, and the perfume of a thousand-hued flowers stole through the windows of lovely Myrtle Lawn.

Jeannette hardly saw the picture, hardly felt the scented zephyrs that played with the brown ringlets dancing on cheek and forehead. Her eye gazed far beyond the scene into undefined space, and the tear that glistened on the long eye-lash, told a story of sad thoughts. Jeannette's brow was cold, her cheeks were pale, and the lips quivered with hardly suppressed emotions. No sigh or word of complaint escaped her, and yet there was a bitter story of blighted hopes in that silent tear that ever and anon trickled down the fair, pale cheek, and fell on an open letter that lay on her lap.

"MELTON MANSION, APRIL —, 1875.

"MISS JEANNETTE EVARTS:—When I tell you that I know this letter will give you pain, it is hardly necessary for me to add that it is a most unpleasant task for me to write it.

"You can not be ignorant of the fact that I should sympathize with you in any trouble, when you are so well aware of the mutual feelings of friendship and affection that have for a long series of years existed between your father and myself. Exclusive of this, Jeannette, I have always regarded you with an affection almost parental, and nothing would now impel me to the course I pursue, but an urgent sense of justice to myself and duty to others. Painful then as my task is, I must not be deterred from its performance.

"Before I enter on it, I must first beg that you mention this letter or its subject to no living person. There are two from whom I am particularly anxious it should be kept a most profound secret. Those two are your father, and my son. The knowledge of it would wound the spirit of the former, and heaven knows I would not unnecessarily give him one pang of pain. My reasons for wishing it kept from the latter, will appear obvious to your mind as you proceed in this perusal, if in fact you have not already divined them.

"I believe you have guessed the subject of this letter to be concerning the engagement said to exist between yourself and my son. Had I been consulted prior to the engagement, there would never have been any occasion for this letter, and the source of all the trouble would in all likelihood have been obviated. But I was

not informed that any such compact was about to be entered into, and the first intimation I had of the contemplated alliance was the information that the contract had already been agreed upon. I hope you will not attach any blame or wanton neglect to my son for my ignorance in the affair, for — as he told me when he informed me of the engagement — he had no doubt that I would readily and cheerfully give my sanction to his marriage with the daughter of my earliest and dearest friend. It is not at all astonishing that he should have been surprised when I informed him that the engagement was not in exact accordance with my wishes; for he knew that in addition to the tie of friendship that bound my house and your father's, I had ever regarded you as one in whom all the qualities of gentleness, amiability and loveliness were combined in most beautiful perfection.

"Had I no hopes of seeing my son rise to a far higher position in life than it is possible for his father ever to attain, nothing would be more grateful to my feelings than to see him wedded with one so pure, so innocent and so attractive as yourself. But from his very childhood — yea, from his very infancy, when I saw him sleeping an unconscious babe upon his mother's bosom, I destined him for an exalted station in life, and prayed that I might see him a shining light in the great political world, reflecting lustre on the name of Melton. That hope, as he advanced in strength and years, grew stronger and brighter within me until it has become the basis of my happiness and the chief study of my

existence. Without it, my life would be tame and aimless.

"Henry, too, is ambitious. I saw the germ in his earlier years, and I watched it grow into a healthful plant, which I watered and nourished that it might strengthen and some day expand into a mighty tree that would take root and branch in the very fibres of his being. My labors, though partially successful, have not been as wholly so as I might have desired, and you cannot wonder that I have used every effort which I could devise to facilitate his progress and ensure his advancement.

"Among other things, I had contracted for him a matrimonial engagement with the daughter of one of the very first men in the nation, whose influence at the head of the Government, together with my son's wealth and accomplishments, would have been an almost sure passport to some high and honorable position. The arrangement alluded to was never openly acknowledged, but it was tacitly understood, and it dates its existence back to a period prior to any engagement entered into between you and Henry. The former then you will, I think, acknowledge is entitled to primary consideration on the claim of its priority, and renders the second null and void, since two engagements of the kind cannot honorably co-exist.

"But I will not offend you by arguing the point. I know you possess a refined sensibility and a delicate sense of honor, and I do not for one moment imagine that you would urge or even allow the fulfillment of an

engagement which you know would be not only unsanctioned by me, but which would in all probability destroy the hopes and aims of my life.

"You may ask, whether, in case this engagement of yours were broken, the other would likely be fulfilled. I answer that there is in my mind scarcely a doubt that my plans would be carried out. I do not think that my son would immediately enter into my plans or embrace my views; for I unhesitatingly declare it my opinion that he loves you now far more than he does any one else. Still I do not doubt but that, if an insurmountable obstacle were placed between you, his love would soon assume the nature of that which exists between a brother and sister, and being divested of its passion, he would be enabled to see the incalculable advantages to be derived from this alliance which I have in prospect for him.

"With all respect then, and with the repeated assurance of my affectionate regards and my high opinion of your character for its qualities of amiability, loveliness and purity, I propose to dissolve this engagement that exists between you and my son. This can only be done by yourself. I have used all the influence I can bring to bear upon him. I have told him that he must conform to my wishes, and have even threatened him with absolute disinheritance unless he complies. Blinded and infatuated as he is by his passion, he still clings to the hope of making you his wife, and by his conduct silently proclaims his purpose of risking my eternal displeasure and the disinheritance with which he is threatened. I say 'threatened,' for it was only a

threat. I could not cast him off penniless, no matter what might be his offence; and though, with a wilful disregard of my wishes and feelings, he were to be guilty of any act which would stamp him a base ingrate, he would lose in a great measure my affection for him, yet he would still bear the Melton name, and as my son would be my sole inheritor.

"I know you too well to be afraid that the prospect of sharing this wealth with my son, could influence you to desist from the performance of a duty which your sense of justice to yourself, to me, and to my son, require at your hands. This act of duty will, I know, be unpleasant to you, Jeannette, but I hope and believe that the pain will be of short duration. How much better would it be so, if even for a time you suffer acutely, than for your marriage with Henry to take place, and after a brief period of happiness, you saw your romantic visions fade into stale, sober reality, and even found that you were being less loved because you had been an instrument — however passive — to hold him back from the height to which, in a moment of cool reflection, his ambition would point.

"I repeat that I have no doubt but that at this time, Henry loves you with all the capacity of his heart, and that he would — as long as you hold out the hope to him of becoming his wife — be willing to make any sacrifice for your sake — fortune, everything, and in his blindness and his madness, dare even death itself. But, Jeannette, this is not the love that would endure: it is passion. And when, after a season, the hot blood of youth would be tempered down by calm reasoning and

increasing years and cares, the scales would fall from his eyes, he would worship you no longer and not only not be the passionate adorer, but might almost accuse you in his mind of mercenary motives in allowing yourself to become his wife, since that act cut off the sure prospect of preferment held out to him by this union which I have planned. I believe that you will feel the truth of this reasoning, and I can not for one moment think that you will knowingly oppose my wishes in this matter, and come between me and the accomplishment of aims upon which all my hopes and happiness depend for all time.

"Again then, do I say, let this engagement between you and my son be dissolved, and I repeat that it can only be done by yourself. If you are at a loss how to act, I will give you some suggestions. I wish you, however, to bear in mind the importance of keeping this letter a profound secret from him. I suppose he has informed you of my disapprobation. If so, and you still hold out to him hopes, conditionally or otherwise, let him know immediately on his return that you have reflected on the subject during his absence, and that you have come to the conclusion that you cannot, consistently with your convictions of duty, justice and propriety, fulfill the engagement which is distasteful to me.

"Encourage his visits no more, and if he urges his claim, and declares his willingness to give up all prospect of fortune for your sake, be you likewise firm and tell him that you will not allow him to make this sacrifice for you, even if your happiness for life

depended upon it—which I assure you does not. At first, he will appear—and doubtless will be—unhappy, and unless you fortify yourself, his despair may move you. You may for the time, suffer a good deal in controlling your feelings, but in the end it will all be decidedly for the best. When the storm is over and your skies are all bright again, Henry shall know the sacrifice you so generously and disinterestedly made for him, and he will love you as a dear sister, while you in all probability will be wedded with one who will render your life far more uniformly happy than he would do.

"And now I close, and I do so with a perfect confidence that your magnanimity will prompt an unhesitating compliance with my wishes herein set forth; in which case you will have the everlasting gratitude of one who flatters himself that his friendship, shared by so few, is not entirely worthless.

"I have the honor to be

"Yours truly,

"E. MELTON."

The evil had come: it was no longer the *shadow*. The storm in all its blackness and fury had lowered o'er her life, and its gloom obscured almost every ray of earthly hope and happiness. The heart of the young maiden was well nigh broken, and no glad sunlight beamed on her way—no ray save that Divine Light which the eye of Faith discerned beyond the future of the world. From her very childhood she had innocently loved—had cherished dreams which had

been her happiness, and converted earth into an Eden, while all the way, as she glided down the beautiful current of her life, an image had been growing on her heart until it had been fixed and established there, her earthly idol. With scarce the whisper of a warning voice, those dreams had been broken — the sweet cup dashed from her lips — the fondest hopes of her young life shattered, and bitter disappointment fraught with anguish was the realization, while the future seemed a dreary wilderness, with no green spot or bright flowers blooming on the desert wilds.

CHAPTER XIX.

CURRENT COIN OF CONVERSATION.

IT is hardly within our province to follow the Glennmore party in their tour of pleasure. It is true the scenery along the banks of the Potomac is grand and picturesque, and that there are many points of interest all along its shores; but these have been so often and so graphically described that nothing we might add would be new. We might stand with Henry Melton and Ellen Glennmore on the renowned old heights of Fredericksburg, and look over the far stretching plains and the green meadows through which flows historic old Rappahanock; might look with them upon broad fields of growing grain, or waving grass and opening flowers; or down upon happy homes in whose peaceful shelter are happy hearts.

Yet, as the eye catches sight of a battered wall or a splintered tree, there steals upon us the mournful memory of an agonizing time that we would fain forget. We know of a day when these same old heights reverberated with the thunders of a thousand guns. We remember a time when those far stretching plains resounded with the din and the shouts, with the roar and the wails of contending armies and dying men. We can tell of a day when those same fields of growing grain and waving grass and opening flowers were covered — not with these marks of peace and thrift —

but with the marks of a horrible internecine strife that made the land all red and gory. That bright river so calmly flowing through yon lovely valley was then stained with the crimson tide of brothers' blood commingled. From those horrors over yonder, now all quiet and peaceful, there rang out their cries of anguish and terror.

The gentle zephyr bears upon its breath the sweet perfume of opening flowers, and there steals upon our senses a feeling of relief; just then we wonder if that same flower borrowed any of its crimson tint from the soil it fed on, that soil once so red and gory. These are harrowing memories. We would turn from them.

We might follow the party in their rides over the fields around Richmond, which have made the name of Virginia's historic city immortal; but in those memorable "seven days" of blood and horror, we saw too much of anguish and woe that the retrospection should be pleasant. We saw, it is true, deeds of dauntless daring; deeds of self-immolation; deeds of heroism that made us think better of ourselves, and love our fellow-men. Let these memories be undying: all else forgotten be. We might journey with them in their wanderings through Shenandoah's gorgeous vales and o'er her splendid mountains, the fairest region that the sun ever shone on; that land whose beauty we will not mar by an attempt at description. What pen can depict the beauties of that land of magnificent mountains, of beautiful valleys, of sparkling rivers, of lovely villages, of glowing fields, of happy hours and generous hearts? We can not forget them. But there are other

memories connected with that land which also will ever remain with us.

As we stand with Henry Melton and Ellen Glenmore, on the range of mighty hills that overlook the valleys of Strasbourg, we think of a time when those same hills glistened with the bayonets of ten thousand Confederate soldiers, and those plains were convulsed with the wild thunders of battle. We think of the wicked but dauntless and unflinching old hero, Early; with his right hand man, Ramseur, standing by him, the embodiment of the christian virtues, a perfect gentleman, a thorough Chesterfield, with a heart as brave and as true, and as noble as ever lived in any land. With our mind's eye now we see them just as we once in reality saw them, withstanding the onslaughts of the dashing Sheridan and his far outnumbering hosts. The skilled old soldier and brave old hero Early, with possibly an oath on his lips, gave his commands; while from the heart of Ramseur issued a silent prayer as, with a quiet determined smile on his handsome young face, he gave his directions in the calmest possible manner, and with the smoothest gesture. Oh, that the memory might be arrested here.

A little later the scene changed. We ride along the turnpike just behind the one who slowly follows his hopelessly routed forces, and we see the silent tears coursing down the rugged old soldier's cheeks, and in the bitterness of mortified pride, he hears not, heeds not the whistling bullets or the whizzing shells. From the other there comes upon the breezes a mournful message. *He is dying.* His death was glorious. He

saw no defeat. Amid all these shouts of victory; amid all those curses of disaster; amid all that despair and darkness there was a light about him, and from those dying lips that were still wreathed with that same peaceful smile, there came these words for the young wife. "Tell my wife I die in the love of Jesus."

Those fair meadows and those of grain, and grass, and fruit and flowers, tell no tales now of those sorrowful days. The marks of them are all effaced to reappear no more forever. So would we have all recollection blotted out, all save holy memories, and lessons taught us by heroic deeds.

* * * * * *

"Is it possible that Mr. Melton can be silent in a scene like this? Why! even I am impressed with its beauties. I, who only two days ago, excited your wonder because I could not go into ecstasy over an ordinary picture of moonlight which I have witnessed a hundred times."

"Suppose, Miss Glennmore, I were to tell you that my enthusiasm has been dampened by the conversation on the occasion referred to, and that I have been silent from fear of a want of sympathy, what would you say?"

"I would say you were not serious in the assertion, because I am quite confident you were almost entirely forgetful of my presence when I first spoke."

"In which case, I suppose I should justly lose your respect."

"Not necessarily."

"If not, then what apology would Miss Glennmore

deem sufficient for my strange and unaccountable inattention?"

"Make your apologies first to these surroundings — the birds, the bees, the fish, the fawns, the flowers, the fountains, the spraying waters and those rainbow hues, and if Dame Nature can pardon your insusceptibility —"

"Suppose, Miss Glennmore, that I was and am deeply impressed with all the beauties around us."

"Then I should esteem myself fortunate in being generally less susceptible than Mr. Melton, since he, almost an enthusiast, only receives from the charms of Nature impressions of sadness and melancholy."

"Does Miss Glennmore think that a picture like this can inspire any such emotions?"

"I did not so imagine, but when you declare you have been deeply impressed by it, I am converted by an evidence that is indisputable."

"Will you condescend to explain the nature of that evidence?"

"Certainly, you say that you are not insensible to the beauties around you and that the picture is one of perfect loveliness."

"I did, and I repeat that I can not recall or scarcely imagine one more perfectly enchanting. What, for instance, can be more pleasing to the eye than those fountains there, casting their fleecy waters high into the air, forming pictures of grace and beauty, and sparkling in the sunlight bathing all around in the varied hues of the rainbow?"

"Yet, Mr. Melton, awhile ago, you were taking in all

this, and it seems to give you no pleasure, for your face was clouded as if with heavy care, and I even fancied I heard a sigh. What other conclusion then could I arrive at than that you were less susceptible than you profess to be, or that the impressions you received were those of sadness?"

"Miss Glennmore seems to ignore altogether the idea of association. Might I not have experienced actual delight, and drank pleasant draughts from this picture of natural and artificial beauty, and in a moment more had the cup dashed with bitterness by some memory which this scene (probably from its resemblance to some other wherewith were connected unpleasant associations) had awakened?"

"Very true; but what am I to think of a young man who, acting as my escort, would allow himself to be so under the control of any thoughts or feelings to such a degree as to cause him to forget that I had placed myself under his charge or was even by his side?"

"You must think him ungallant in the extreme, and deny him your presence hereafter, unless you give ear to an humble prayer for pardon on promise of better behavior in future."

"If that prayer be granted, what surety will I have that the offence be not repeated?"

"I can give Miss Glennmore no other surety than my word, unless it be a conditional one, which by the way would be hard if he had to forfeit."

"May it please you, what may that conditional surety be?"

"Nothing less than that if ever the offence be

repeated, I submit unmurmuringly to eternal banishment from your presence."

"Terrible doom!"

"Terrible indeed; and if there were any danger of a repetition of the offence the gloomy prospect would most assuredly be sufficient to keep me on guard with my eyes open."

"Is my society then so highly appreciated by Mr. Melton?"

"I assure Miss Glennmore, that I do highly appreciate the privilege that admits me to her society, and consider myself the recipient of distinguished honor in being received on terms of such social friendship and kindness, by a lady so highly accomplished and so universally admired as Senator Glennmore's brilliant daughter."

"Then Mr. Melton's conduct and professions have been sadly at variance."

"I shall have to call for another explanation."

"And know it is not needed; but, however, Mr. Melton speaks of a privilege. It is one of long standing, and yet in the past methinks, has not very assiduously availed himself of it."

"Will Miss Glennmore, allow me to remind her that I have but very lately returned from the college halls. Will she not respect the self-denial I exercised in permitting myself to be held back by a sense of duty from reaching forth to grasp the sweet flowers which the gentle hand of friendship held out so invitingly to view."

"Pray what duty was it at whose peremptory call you made yourself such a martyr?"

"It was the duty that bound me to my studies; that bade me avail myself of the advantages that lay within my reach of improving the talent that God has given me; of preparing myself, as far as I might be able, to be of service to my country and to my fellow-man, and to enrich, if possible, my mind and my heart, that I might contribute to the pleasure and to the good of society in general."

"If such were the motives that restrained you, I do respect them; but in obeying the call, while you were learning rhetoric, it seems that you took a few lessons in the art of flattery. Did 'duty' teach from that book too?"

"I trust that Miss Glennmore thinks me hardly capable of dealing in such a wicked art. Or if she has no better opinion of my heart, I hope she has of my head, than to think that were I especially skilled, I would undertake to practice it on one of her acute penetration."

"Before I decide, you must inform me, lest I did not comprehend, the meaning of your rhetorical figure when you spoke of the sweet flowers which the gentle hand of friendship, and so on."

"If Miss Glennmore will not be offended, I will venture to say she combines a little tyranny with mischievousness. But since I am a loyal subject to her pleasure I will do her bidding, and say that the 'friendship' I spoke of was the identical feeling with which I flattered myself she honored me; the fragrant flowers were the many charms of her society, and the hand that held them out was the privilege I enjoyed of

admittance into that society which is esteemed not only agreeable but fascinating."

"Yet that society seems to have lost all its boasted charms to-day, or Mr. Melton came prepared to resist its fascinating powers."

"On the contrary, I have felt them most forcibly, and have enjoyed the walk so much that I shall regret exceedingly its termination."

"One who noticed your abstraction awhile since might have imagined your enjoyment to have been of a very singular nature."

"Did not the shadow prove only momentary, passing away like the flitting cloud of an April morning? The heart must be heavy indeed that could not catch some ray from the light of your presence."

"I hope if Mr. Melton's has caught the reflection the light may not prove like the shadow — evanescent."

"If it were to prove so, I would have but to throw myself again within its rays to feel the lustre as I do now."

"To hear you talk, one might imagine that this light was kept trimmed and burning for your special benefit. Suppose the one from whom it emanated, perceiving that its effects were merely transient, were to withhold its beams, and let it shine on you no longer, what then?"

"Friendship, Miss Glennmore, is its guardian, and will not suffer it to be extinguished."

"Mr. Melton seems to attach much importance to that quality he calls 'friendship.' Does he believe in

it as a reality, and that any considerable sacrifice would be made for its sake?"

"I do, and know it to be one of the noblest principles of the soul. It is second in power and influence to only one other agent of the human bosom. I believe it is next to that passion which would enable a man to dare death for the one dear object of his love."

"Mr. Melton will please excuse me, but he speaks as if he were not a stranger to either feeling. I wonder if he is willing to prove the strength and reality of the first-named passion by confiding to me his experience in the latter?"

"Am I to understand that this is required as an evidence of my friendship?"

"By no means; I would not wish to put that all absorbing passion to the test if the trial would prove a severe one."

"It would cost me nothing to confide in you, were I to flatter myself that your feelings were really so kind towards me, as to cause you to be interested in my little personal affairs."

"If I were to tell you that you may think so without any flattery to yourself?"

"Then I would tell you that I had loved:—loved with all my heart's capacity for many years a beautiful maiden, the embodiment of all that is good, pure and lovely. One who in my childhood's days was my happy little associate; one whose image grew on my heart with the passing years, and whose angel-face, smiling ever on me, kept me in the paths of duty and

rectitude, and furnished all during the tedious years of study and toil, an ever acting stimulus to honest effort."

"She must have been a very superior being indeed, if I am to judge from your enthusiasm. Will you honor me still further by confiding to me the name of this paragon of loveliness?"

"Has Miss Glennmore heard nothing that would give her an idea of whom I speak?"

"Jeannette Evarts?"

"You have guessed rightly."

Ellen Glennmore's face, which for the last minute had been growing pale and anxious, became suddenly paler; the merry mischievous sparkle of her dark eye gave way to a cold feelingless lustre, and Henry Melton thought that the little hand that lay upon his arm was tremulous. This was only for a moment, and her voice sounded as unconcerned as usual when she said:

"I have seen Miss Evarts, though I have not the honor of an intimate acquaintance. I have regarded her as quite pretty, and have no doubt she is well worthy of your high esteem. But now let us proceed to our hotel. You know we are to attend the grand ball to-night, and I must rest myself to be in readiness."

For several minutes they moved on without speaking, and were almost at the entrance of the ladies' parlor, when Henry Melton, turning his eyes upon his companion with something of a searching look, said:

"I believe I have given you satisfactory evidence of the genuineness of my friendship for you. May I feel that you honor me with a reciprocal feeling?"

"The evidence, Mr. Melton, was not required, as I told you; but it is the more conclusive that it was voluntary. Mr. Melton may be assured of my kindest feelings and best wishes."

"Will you honor me with your hand in the first dance to-night?"

"Yes."

CHAPTER XX.

PARENTAL PLOTS.

REARED amidst wealth and luxury; accustomed to homage, adulation and flattery; taught in a school where successful coquetry was considered one of the polite arts, and where personal attractions and worldly accomplishments were paramount to purity of heart and goodness of soul, it is a matter of no wonder that Ellen Glennmore had lost much of the warm and tender sensibility with which nature had endowed her. The lessons that she was learning as she grew from childhood, became, in later years, fixed principles, so that when she reached the age of womanhood, she was a finished coquette, regarding love as the mere medium of amusement or position, trifling with the finest emotions of the soul, and looking on hearts as the unfeeling playthings of an idle hour.

Ellen Glennmore was brilliant, and she knew it. She was beautiful, but that had been whispered into her ear until it had become irksome, and had ceased to excite pleasure even through her vanity. In conjunction with beauty, brilliancy and all the advantages that wealth could purchase, she was the daughter of a distinguished United States Senator. With all these superior circumstances operating in her interest, it is a fact not at all surprising that she was almost universally admired. She was so much, but so vainly sought

after, that some of her suitors, after fruitless efforts to awake in her bosom any tender emotion, declared and believed her to be utterly heartless. Yet she was not heartless. *What woman ever was?*

It is true that hers was somewhat hardened by an unwise system of education; still a heart was there nevertheless; and away down in a little recess was the fount of affection, the woman's tenderness, the capacity for loving. This capacity was drawn within somewhat narrow limits; was constricted by a system which taught her to repress the tender emotions as weaknesses unworthy a strong mind; yet it only wanted culture for expansion; and, though the way of the heart was barred with pride, as its guardian, and though training had encrusted it with an icy coating, yet a word or a whisper from Henry Melton would have melted it into love, and enkindled into a flame the little spark which seemed about to be smothered and extinguished by the chilling influence by which it had ever been surrounded. She did not really love him, yet felt herself drawn toward him by an irresistible sympathy, which she could not, or did not try to analyze. From the time they first met, his superiority was acknowledged, and this grew upon her as they became subsequently better acquainted. She was impressed with his manly bearing, so full of dignity and independence, yet withal so courteous and urbane.

Accustomed to the admiration, if not the worship of all with whom she came in contact, she expected it, as a matter of course, from Henry Melton. To win his

heart would be an easy task, she thought; while it could do no possible harm to any one, and would furnish her amusement for an idle hour. As time passed on, and he made no particular effort to seek her society, or take advantage of any opportunity to make any advances or serious declarations, the matter began to assume a more important aspect, and that which in the beginning was undertaken at the mere suggestion of pride or vanity, had now become an earnest effort.

About this time, the two fathers, seeing the mutual advantages that would accrue from a union between their children, came to some agreeable understanding on the subject. Though the matter was handled with much delicacy, they tacitly understood that each was to use every practicable means in his power to bring about the proposed alliance. The truth of it was, that Mr. Glennmore was almost, if not quite as anxious for the marriage as his friend was. The former had, all his life, been a very gay man of the world; and, though he wielded a powerful influence which no short-comings in his moral character could scarcely diminish, much less destroy, he was fond to excess of costly and worldly display, delighted in all the fashionable immoralities of the day, and, it was said, sometimes lost large sums of money at the gaming table. This drain, together with his lavish and wasteful mode of living, kept his finances in a crippled and disordered condition. While he knew that he would never suffer from absolute poverty, he was not blind to the fact that, unless something was done he not only

might, but probable *would* be deprived of the means and ability to continue in his favorite course of life, which had not only deeply impressed the many, but had excited the surprise, if not the admiration, of his worldly-minded cotemporaries.

The marriage of his daughter with the only son of the lordly old merchant, his friend, would be the very thing, since it would furnish a safeguard against any prospective evil or threatened deficiency in his financial outlook. There were no good reasons, either, why the affair should not take place. It could hardly hurt him in a social point of view. Although Edwin Melton had no political prominence or fame, he was widely known among the business circles of the country; and had power—for Wealth is Power every where. Besides, his son was no ordinary young man. He was not only handsome and agreeable, but evidently talented; he had distinguished himself at college, and, young as he was, had already attracted some attention in literary circles. Mr. Glennmore, grew anxious about the match, was not careful to conceal from his daughter the high opinion he entertained for the young man in question, and even slily suggested that it might be worth her time to win him, giving her to understand that he knew no one whom he regarded more worthy of her love, or to whom he would prefer to give her hand in marriage. This voluntarily avowed approbation of her secret designs, on the part of her father, whose sentiments and opinions she regarded above all others, together with the already increasing favor with

which she looked upon young Melton, determined her to put forth all her powers to win him, and caused her to feel an interest in him which she had never felt for any other.

Time wore on, and it seems she did not make very rapid progress; for, although he had on one occasion, obeying the dictates of a most natural impulse, allowed expressions of admiration of her beauty to escape him, he never gave her to understand that it had ever awakened any tenderer emotion; nor did he ever profess for her any warmer feeling than an ordinary friendship. At this want of susceptibility to charms before which so many others had bowed, Miss Glennmore was piqued; but this only served to fan the spark into a little flame, and made her mind more bent than ever on her purpose. The sum of it was, Ellen Glennmore was *beginning* to love Henry Melton, though she herself scarcely knew it, until one day, a short time previous to her visit to Virginia, her eyes were opened to the fact by the pang which she felt on hearing of the engagement said to exist between him and Jeannette Evarts. She was not quite prepared or disposed to believe it; and, while it might be so, the suspense was a source of uneasiness to her, and she determined to redouble her efforts to win him before it should be too late.

This state of mind was the principal factor in deciding that Virginia tour, as she hoped and believed that having him almost constantly with her for a week or two, she would be able to throw around him influences

which would force him into a declaration of love; or if she should fail in this, she would at least be able to satisfy her mind as to the truth or falsity of the rumored engagement.

The morning on which we introduced her, the party had ended their excursion through Virginia, and had that day returned to Washington. The walk they were enjoying on the occasion of the conversation which we have related, was got up by the lady with a feeling somewhat akin to last hope; for, although they had been almost constantly together for nearly two weeks, she had not been able to elicit from him any token or evidence of a passion more than that of esteem and friendship. Their conversation may give the reader enough insight into Miss Glennmore's character, for him to understand the situation, and to appreciate her feelings on hearing from young Melton's own lips the truth of that which she had hitherto only vaguely feared. She felt a sharp pang at her heart and a momentary bitterness; but pride came to the rescue, and sustained her defiantly under her disappointment, the anguish of which would otherwise have been almost unendurable.

It was well for her, just then, that she had been taught as she had been; and that her heart had been rendered comparatively callous by a system of education that is wicked and perverting. It is an evil wind that blows no good. Had Miss Glennmore's naturally fine and tender feelings been cultivated, instead of blunted, the disappointment under which she suffered

might have been blighting. As it was, her *pride* probably suffered more than her affections; and even this, so abundantly fed by others, soon recovered from the blow—so soon in fact, that even that very night, at the grand ball, of which she spoke, attired in rich beauty and fashionable elegance, she was by far the most dazzling of many brilliant stars; the chief centre of attraction; the most admired; apparently the happiest, and decidedly the fairest, of all that galaxy of sparkling, laughing beauty and bewildering splendor.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHATTERED HOPES.

THE twilight shades were gathering over the valleys, and the church spires of our pretty village were gleaming dimly in the fast fading light of the western skies, as Henry Melton passed up the broad avenue to Melton Mansion, on the evening of the day after the conversation related in our last chapter but one.

Instead of meeting his father, as he expected, he found a letter, informing him that important business in Philadelphia and New York, might probably delay his return for a week. It further stated:

"I had the good fortune to hear of you, from Richmond, and was particularly pleased to learn how marked your attentions had been to the beautiful and brilliant Miss Glennmore, and heartily congratulate you that your attentions were received with such evident pleasure. My heart is elated, my son, at the thought that my dearest hopes will now surely be realized; and I rejoice at the bright prospect of preferment—fortune and happiness—that seems to be so invitingly within your reach.

"I trust you will not allow yourself to be rendered unhappy through sympathy with Miss Evarts, in the disappointment she will very naturally feel at this reverse in her fortune. It is quite reasonable, under the circumstances, that you should sympathize with

her; but it would be folly in you to permit your sympathies to influence your mind to the extent of producing any real unhappiness. I doubt that she will much need your sympathies; for, with her careless and joyous disposition, and buoyant, happy spirit, I really think it more than probable she will forget the whole affair in a week or two. In any event, no blame whatever can possibly be attached to your conduct; since your engagement with her was made without being cognizant of the fact that *another* had a prior claim upon you. This certainly must exonerate you from any charge of fault or faithlessness in the non-fulfillment of a hasty compact, contracted, as this was, under the stimulus of passion, and in the thoughtless impulse of youth."

Henry had passed the point where this letter could give much concern; but he held another letter, and as he broke the seal his face became pale and anxious, and his heart beat quickly and irregularly.

"MYRTLE LAWN, May —, 1875.

"MR. HENRY MELTON:

"If seeing the fondest hopes of my life blasted, the purest and holiest feelings of my soul crushed and blighted, were insufficient to complete the anguish of my heart, no other agency would be required, than the certain knowledge that this letter will give you pain. When you read it, try not to think unkindly of me, for my misery is complete without your condemnation.

"*We must part!* Oh, Henry! it is so sudden: this quick transition from joy to woe. Just a week or two

ago, the skies were all bright to me. There was not a shadow to be seen on the beautiful surface of our future lives. The roses of hope and happiness bloomed fresh and fragrant in our bosoms, and no thistle or thorn grew there to crush them out or poison their beauty.

"Repinings are useless. It is vain and idle for us to linger with the memories, or to try to gather up the fragments of broken hopes. *We must part.* Henry! oh, Henry! it gives me pain; my poor heart bleeds to write, as much as yours will to read — *we must part.* Until our last interview, no thought of evil had entered my mind. Your words, though strange, did not seem prophetic until we had parted, when I took them to my heart and pondered on their meaning. It was then that the dark angel for the first time flapped his wings about me, and I felt the shadow of coming sorrow. I need not tell you how my worst fears and misgivings were confirmed into certain grief by your letter which was written on the evening after our conversation, and just preceding your departure for Virginia. I pondered well over that letter, and my mind suggested thoughts and arguments on the situation contrary to the view which you took of it. It is needless for me to enter into a useless discussion, but I will say that my situation was a miserable one. I was constrained to sacrifice my happiness and yours, or I must secure ours by sacrificing the hopes and happiness of one to whom you owe your earthly all. This is not all; but as I said, I will not enter into a needless discussion. I have tearfully and prayerfully considered

the subject in all its various lights and bearings, and I have come to a conclusion. That conclusion is unalterable and immovable; and the fixed and unchanging purpose of my heart is—*to break the tie that has bound us together.*

"Oh, Henry, by the happiness of the past, by the tender love we have cherished for each other, by these burning tears that will gush into my eyes in spite of all that I can do, I implore you not to condemn me. Do not say that I am fickle or inconstant. Do not remind me of the moss rock, where I told you I would be your wife, even were you cut off from all prospect, and thrown penniless on the world. I would have done so. Heaven knows I could not be actuated or influenced in a matter of this kind by any mercenary motives. Were I to-day the possessor of countless thousands, and had your father in the vicissitudes of fortune been reduced to bankruptcy, I should not hesitate one moment about marrying you. I would be your bride far sooner than were things reversed, and *I* the pauper and *you* the millionaire. If my cup of happiness needed one drop to make it beatitude, that addition would be furnished when I could lay my head next your heart, and place my fortunes in your hands. But Henry, I should have no fortune to indemnify you in case you lost your own by a marriage with me. Instead, I could bring you nothing but double poverty.

"You may ask what I mean. I will enlighten you. My father told me, only a few days ago, that he was comparatively a bankrupt: that his pecuniary affairs are so much embarrassed, he fears he shall have to

suspend his business in the city in order to remove a mortgage that hangs over Myrtle Lawn — this, our dear old homestead, around which cluster so many hallowed associations of the past.

"You tell me in your letter that 'you are ready and willing to forego all for my sake; that you defy poverty and dare your father's threatened disinheritance.' The declaration is characteristic of your superior magnanimity. But, Henry, you are impulsive, and you allow your great love for me to blind your judgment. You under-estimate all the incalculable advantages which you propose to sacrifice. You are ambitious. Put your wealth to interest. It will prove a lever-power to your efforts; and, while I know you will disdain to buy preferment, and would scorn the favor that gold would purchase, yet an honorable eminence is none the less honorable that the road to it happened to lie over a golden way. If you reject my advice, still clinging to the hope of dissuading me from my purpose, I tell you now, Henry, that your efforts will be vain and fruitless. I am fixed and unchangeable.

"I do not deny that I still love — will always love you, dear Henry. My candor may be impolitic. I have never learned to dissemble.

"Go, Henry. Follow the dictates of your mind's laudable ambition. Sustained and guarded by a heart like yours, this ambition can never degenerate into an ungodly passion. And when, in some not far distant day, I shall witness your promotion; when in a coming year I shall see you standing on an eminence, dealing out wisdom, and benefiting your fellow-men; when

your father sees his highest hopes and aims in life all fulfilled, and his cup of joy full to the brim — do you cast one thought back to Jeannette, and know that she, too, is pleasured in your happiness, and glories in your success.

"Now, Henry, leave me. Our paths henceforth diverge; but may we not still be friends? Let us cherish for each other the same hallowed feeling that moved our hearts one towards the other, in those happy days when we were children, careless and thoughtless.

"And, oh! Henry, let us not despair! If our heart-hopes are broken, let us look through the dark shadows of this life to the Soul Light, that emanates from Him, who chasteneth those whom He loveth.

"Henry, farewell.

"JEANNETTE EVARTS."

CHAPTER XXII.

A PASSIONATE PARTING.

AN hour later, Henry Melton might be found in the parlor at Myrtle Lawn, standing in front of the fire-place. A few feet from him, sat Jeannette Evarts, pale, silent, haggard.

"And *this*, then, Jeannette, is the realization of my dreams? This, the end of all my hopes?"

"The fortune is none of our making or choosing, Henry. It is the decree of destiny."

"You are immovable, Jeannette? You will never marry me?"

"Yes, Henry, immovable. I can never marry you, except on the condition that you gain your father's approval; and this you say you can never hope to do."

"Too true, Jeannette. I have nothing to hope from him; he will never relent."

"Then my purpose is fixed. I am inflexible."

"Can nothing — nothing move you?"

"Nothing, even though my heart may break."

There was a painful moment's pause, and then Henry again addressed her.

"Do you believe in an orthodox creed — are you a Christian, Jeannette?"

"I will pardon you, Henry, even though unasked; and will answer your question, as much as your doubts pain me. I trust that I am a Christian, and it is my

faith that sustains me in all hours of misfortune — in all times of darkness."

"Forgive me, but may Heaven deliver me from such a doctrine, if your conduct be the result of its teachings."

Jeannette shuddered; then rising to her feet and advancing to where he stood, she laid her hand upon his shoulder, and looking up into his wild eyes and haggard face, exclaimed:

"Henry, Henry, are you mad?"

"If I am mad, Jeannette, you have made me so. I am mad, if it be madness to pray for deliverance from a system and a religion which allows one of its disciples to make a sacrifice of the holiest feelings of the heart for the sake of a false pride, which is not only antagonistic to my feeling and principle of justice, but which is perversive of every humane and tender sentiment of man's heart."

"Oh, Henry, you mistake me. It is not pride by which I am chiefly influenced. I am actuated by a sense of propriety. You acknowledge that your father has based all his hopes upon the fulfillment of this engagement which he has formed for you. Have I a moral right to come between him and his dearest wishes, and, by complying with your solicitations, thwart his hopes, and wreck his happiness? Besides this, there is another whose happiness would be imperiled — perhaps blighted for all time: one who has a claim on your heart prior to my own, and who doubtless loves you with all her soul's capacity; one who has probably been taught from her girlhood to love you as

her own, and to look upon you as her future husband; until now her every bright dream and every fond hope is inseparably associated with your name. Would you have me marry you and thereby poison the sweet cup she quaffs — give her the broken hopes of a life-time to mourn — while I would not only destroy your worldly prospect, and bring double poverty to your door, but might be a serious hindrance to your advancement and an incumbrance as you worked your way up the steps of fame? Am I not right? Do not try to influence me. My heart is yours, but my hand can never be. My mind is fixed, and arguments are useless in a cause that is hopeless. Your efforts to dissuade will all be idle and fruitless, while they can only serve to aggravate our mutual anguish."

"Cease, for heaven's sake, cease! You madden me! Would you have me perjure myself by marrying Ellen Glennmore, when every pulsation of my throbbing bosom is replete with love for you?"

"Yet, Henry, may you not be able to forget the past, and learn to love her?"

"What has come over you, Jeannette? What cursed influence has wrought this cruel transformation? Have you so soon forgotten the happy past, with all its train of sacred memories?"

"I have not. Those sacred memories will never pass from my heart; but I would not dwell on them just now, lest my strength be put to too severe a trial in enduring the hopelessness of the present."

"Hopelessness of the present! Ha! ha! And pray tell us, Jeannette, tell us about the future."

"A far brighter and happier destiny for *you*, than any you now imagine. All things work together for good to them that love God. The circumstances that visited this blighting disappointment upon us were none of our making. We could in no wise have controled them. They were purely providential, and will doubtless eventually result in our mutual good; though it is hard for us to believe this now. Be strong, be firm.

"'Mute
The camel labors with the heaviest load.
And the wolf dies in silence: not bestowed
In vain should such example be: if they,
Things of ignoble or of savage mood
Endure and shrink not, we, of noble clay
May temper it to bear — it is but for a day.'

"Go, Henry; leave me. Engage your mind with new plans, new pursuits. You will, in time, forget Jeannette; and when you are married to Ellen Glen—"

"Would you drive me to madness? I tell you I cannot love any other than yourself. Ellen Glennmore does not look upon me as her future husband. If she ever entertained such an idea, it has been dispelled. I have seen her. Two days ago I told her all. *She knows* that Jeannette Evarts is the betrothed of Henry Melton."

"I grieve that you have done this, since it cannot in the least alter my resolution."

"Jeannette, are you prepared for the separation? Are you ready that we should part?"

"Ready — if you will only say that we may still be friends. Oh, remember the happy, the holy days that

are past, and give me your hand, in token of a brother's love."

"Farewell, Jeannette! You ask for a brother's love. I know it not. My soul acknowledges but one passion. There is none other there but the same deep, unbending devotion that first won, and afterwards bound your young heart to mine. That, no time or fortune can ever shake; and may you not learn, alas! too late, that it were not well to cast it from you thus."

Henry Melton started toward the door; but just as he was crossing the threshold, he involuntarily turned. Their eyes met. He rushed forward, seized her cold and trembling hands within his own, hardly less cold, and, throwing himself on his knees at her feet, in a tone replete with sadness yet full of touching earnestness, poured forth this somewhat incoherent, but none the less pathetic expostulation and appeal:

"Jeannette, oh! Jeannette, I cannot leave you thus! In the name of God and justice, I pray you to pause, ere you blast my life with all its sweet and tender promises; ere you wreck all my hopes, and thwart every good end and aim of my life. Remember how I have loved you; how in the joyous days of our careless childhood, your gentle voice made sweeter music to my heart than the soft notes of the wild birds that you loved; when the glad, warm light of your mild, blue eye was the sunshine of my soul, and the dawning rays of a happier existence. I appeal to you, in the name of every feeling that is dear and sacred to man's bosom. I appeal to you in the name of the sweet memories that now crowd themselves in quick

succession on my burning brain, in this hour of my heart's darkness and evil. I appeal to you by the utter wretchedness of the present, and by the blank hopelessness of the future, to pause, reconsider and revoke your cruel decision, ere it be irrevocably too late. You weep, Jeannette. Bright, beautiful star of my destiny, say, oh, say, that I may not leave you!"

For a minute or more, the poor girl was completely overcome. At last, by a manifestly powerful effort she recovered herself, and, though her face was as pale as the whitest marble, her voice was clear and firm, as she said:

"My heart bleeds with your own, Henry; but the die has been cast, and our hopes are broken. It is the voice of destiny. Farewell!"

She bowed her face in her hands and shuddered. When she looked up, a moment afterwards, she — was alone. Henry had rushed from the room, and no voice but the voice of a broken heart echoed back the mournful farewell.

Jeannette gazed for a long minute on the open door through which he had fled, then closing her eyes she sank back on the sofa, while in a low, plaintive tone, she cried:

"Gone, *gone*, GONE. Oh! God. God of my sainted mother, forsake me not!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

HEROISM IN SPAIN.

ON the following evening a young man with a handsome, but haggard face, and with his arms folded across his bosom, paced the deck of an ocean steamer. Ever and anon he leaned forward and strained his eyes toward the fast fading shore, while a tear for a moment trembled on the lid and then quickly fell in the waters below. Shore and city were fast disappearing. Further — further the shore — a mere speck, it is gone. Further, dimmer the glittering spire — like a glistening star twinkling, dimmer, dimmer — it is lost, and as far as the eye can reach is the boundless waste of waters.

* * * * * *

Now the scene changes. For a short season we will bid adieu to Henry Melton, and leave him on the ocean with his broken hopes. For a while let us leave behind us Myrtle Lawn, with weeping innocence, with her hopes and her fears.

Let us turn our eyes away from Elmwood, with her flower-embosomed cottage, her graceful elms, her neat walks, and the little white gate near the flower arbor. Let us forget for awhile the inmates there, hopeful if not cheerful; blessed in a holy love that knows no selfishness — leave them smiling around the domestic heartstone, unawed by the shadow that darkened their

home — leave them with the finger of hope pointing to fair images in the future. Leave them with the spirit of resignation hovering about them, a spirit that sees no evil in misfortune, but all things for good. Leave them with the angel voices to whisper in dreams; with angel eyes to watch their slumbers.

Let us take our footsteps forth from Melton Mansion, where its lordly owner is sustaining with mute agony and despair, the terrible conflict that pride and a father's love is waging in his worldly heart; contemplating with a speechless misery his shattered hopes, and brooding in anguish o'er his crushing disappointment.

Let us bid them all farewell for a time; and let fancy wing her flight far away, from the scenes that we have known and loved — over blooming vales and grand mountains — far away over broad rivers and seemingly endless seas, and take us once again to that land of the lovely skies and the orange blossoms; where the presses run with wine and oil; where the blooming of the flowers is almost perpetual, and the song of the spring time never ceases. Let us not linger too long in the southern paradise of this enchanting clime, but go up towards the north, where all nature, though not so bewitchingly beautiful, is more sublimely grand.

We leave the oldest city in Europe — fair Cadiz, on the sea, that had its name eleven hundred years before the birth of Christ, and go to where the awe-inspiring Pyrenees present some of the grandest scenery we know on earth; where, nearly twelve thousand feet high, Montserrat rears its monstrous head among the

clouds, and looks out over the vine-clad valleys towards Barcelona on the water; yet benignly, as it were, down on historic Benedictine and her old convents and monasteries. The imposing and magnificent Cantabrian, stretching her arms through Asturias out to the Atlantic, looks to the south o'er valleys where the almond tree flourishes, where the dainty figs and the luscious oranges ripen, and where the "showering grapes in bacchanal profusion reel to earth purple and gushing."

Over that Elysian land, where peace ought to reign with beauty, the roaring guns of combating forces tell the sorrowful tale that the purple flow of the wine-press is but an emblem, and the freshness of the olive branch is a cruel mockery. Will men never look back; never look around; never look up to learn lessons of charity, wisdom and love? Will scenes of carnage among men never cease?

* * * * * *

Horace Evarts' sojourn in Spain was at the time when society was convulsed, and the kingdom in an agony over the Carlist war. In his wretched frame of mind it is a matter of little wonder that he sought diversion and forgetfulness amid the dangers and excitements of a soldier's life. Naturally brave, quick and impulsive, he would have acted well under any circumstances. As it was, the constantly recurring memory of the causes that made him an exile gave a tinge of desperation to his conduct; and his deportment in the several engagements in which he had been, had won him a high promotion from the ranks, and made him an object of admiration, if not of envy, among his fellow soldiers

and superior officers. He was rising to prominence; his star was in the ascendant.

The scene is the field of bloody strife. Five thousand Spanish arms glittering in the same sunlight that bathed the craggy mountain sides and the city at its base in a flood of radiance. The determined faces of this host were turned towards the frowning batteries that protected the city by the mountain — the stronghold of the Carlist forces. Those five thousand Spaniards, now drawn out in battle array, had come to rescue it from the usurper's grasp, or to make their graves about its walls. All was ready. The sharp crack of the skirmisher's rifle was only heard at intervals, and the distant report showed that the enemy's pickets had been forced back on their entrenchments.

A minute more and the forward movement began. It was a solemn moment, and Nature herself seemed in sympathy with the occasion. The air was still and heavy, and not even the note of a bird was heard, nothing save the clanking sword, and the firm, steady tread of an undaunted soldiery. Onward, onward. Nearer — nearer, they approached the fortifications where the heavy ordnance and hosts of insurrectionary forces awaited them. As yet not a shot had been fired; but in a moment more the ground beneath them trembled as with an earthquake. Simultaneously, the roar of a thousand rifles, and the thunders of the guns from the fortress, were echoed from the rugged mountain sides until the awful rumble, sweeping o'er the flowered valleys, had reached the distant sea. Shell, shot and ball tore through the ranks of the advancing warriors, and

made great gaps in their lines. Firm and unshaken they closed in and moved on. Now again like a terrible whirlwind of fire came that blinding flash and that deafening roar; and, as before, the awful missiles of destruction went crashing through the lines of that Spartan band. Again — again, and yet they faltered not. Onward. They would soon be upon the works.

The cry of victory was beginning to fill the air; when, merciful Heaven! the lines were swept from left to right by the fire of an enfilading battery, which, up to this moment, had remained silent from the necessity of its position. The slaughter was sickening to contemplate. For a minute the advancing troops paused irresolute. The action was fatal. Once more the guns from front and flank hurled their deadly missiles among the wavering lines. It was more than human strength and courage could endure. The patriot forces, cut to pieces, turned in retreat; yet, though repulsed with five hundred of their gallant comrades dead or wounded on the field, they were not vanquished. In an hour the lines were re-established, and there was a death-defiant expression on those battle-begrimed faces which plainly told the leaders "We are ready."

Before making a second advance, however, that enfilading battery must be silenced. To attack it in front would be sheer madness, for the charging line would be swept from end to end by the guns from the fortifications. The only possible approach to it was by a side movement, through a narrow defile three hundred yards long. Three hundred determined men might possibly take it, from this direction, though two thirds

of their number would almost certainly be sacrificed in the desperate effort.

What brave spirit would dare to lead these three hundred men? What three hundred men would so defy death as to offer to follow? The situation was laid before the command, and the question arose, "who would lead?" Without a moment's hesitation a young officer stepped forward, and gracefully saluting the commanding General begged that his services might be accepted. The General asked his name. It was given. "Call for your volunteers, Captain." The call was made, and three hundred men who were determined to win or die stepped into line. The young officer, seized a battle-flag from the ranks, and waving it above him, cried aloud:

"Swear with me, comrades, that this emblem shall float over the enemy's guns, or not one of us will survive the effort to place it there."

The deep response and the resolute look on those pale faces told that their answer came from the heart.

The period of suspense was short. Five minutes later the sharp report of a single rifle was heard in the distance. It was the preconcerted signal for the general advance. The volunteers were charging the battery. The main army was moving upon the fortifications. The conflict was terrible. The clash of swords, the rattle of musketry, the roar of cannon were appalling. Dark clouds of sulphurous smoke hung heavy on the air, and almost hid from view the rays of the noonday sun. Onward! The brave army of liberators were on a line with the enfilading battery.

Why did it keep silent? Turing their eyes in the direction they beheld, in the act of mounting upon its guns, the young officer — the volunteer Captain, bare-headed, his long locks floating disheveled, and waving in his strong right hand the tattered emblem which he had sworn to plant upon these guns. He had fulfilled his oath. The enthusiasm was unbounded. The sight to the advancing army was inspiring, and gave fresh vigor to the arm and new impetus to the charge. The cry of "victory," from a thousand tongues rang out on the air, but the young captain heard it not; for just then, pierced through the body by a ball from one of the retreating foe, Horace Evarts fell back prostrate, weltering in his blood, but still grasping in his hand his battle-stained banner. The fortifications were overreached. The city by the mountain was redeemed, but the blood of a thousand Spaniards paid the awful ransom.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OLD SCENES REVISITED.

FOR some days we have been absent from the scenes where have occurred the principal events of our little history; absent from the homes of those whose adventures we have undertaken to write. We have looked upon those scenes when they were gladdened and beautified with the light of love and happiness. We have anxiously watched the light as it grew gradually dimmer and dimmer, until its rays were almost totally obscured by deepening shadows. We have felt our sympathies wax warm and tender as the clouds gathered dark and thick around the hearts our hearts do prize.

Let us return. Though no roseate pictures await us there, we may yet hope that a brighter day is coming, when the ordeal through which our friends have been passing, will only serve as a chastening memory to soften and hallow the joys and the happiness of hopes realized.

We will look in at Melton Mansion.

Writhing under the sting of a blasting disappointment, bowed down with increasing age and broken hopes, and crushed to earth with the ever-recurring recollection of his thwarted aims, Edwin Melton was bitterly deploring the fatal principle that had wrecked his happiness.

If the reader has, in the course of this little sketch, entertained any feelings of unkindness, or even uncharitableness towards the once proud owner of Melton Mansion, he would have forgotten it all, and had a feeling of pity and sympathy aroused in his bosom, could he have seen him then, pale, sorrowful, haggard; left alone and unsupported; the staff he had ever leaned upon broken in fragments. Yes, could you have seen him, on that early summer's evening, seated in his library at an open window, looking out on the broad landscape where Nature bloomed in beauty, we say, could you have seen him then looking out over the picture, and contrasting in his mind the outward world and the inward man you would have forgiven his errors and forgotten his mistakes.

Edwin Melton had changed indeed. A few short weeks had wrought a marked transformation. The erect proud form was beginning to bend beneath the burden of his broken hopes. The manly frame-work was beginning to give way before the undermining influence of a wringing anguish. The dark lustre of the proud eyes was beginning to fade before the vision of a life-labor thrown away. The ruddy cheek, where health had bloomed, was beginning to look pale and sunken, for the touch of sorrow had left its impress there. The lips, whose utterance was command, now trembled and quivered with the pent-up emotions of a troubled soul, and the strong arm was being palsied in sympathy with a mind that might lose its equilibrium from the intolerable shock that had forever shattered his dearest hopes.

The old demon pride that had ever been his guide and counsellor still clung to him, and whispered, "The world must know nothing of this," and Edwin Melton clung to the fragments of his broken staff. Did it avail? He looked forth from his lordly mansion to the great broad lands, which almost as far as his glance might reach, he could claim as his own. He thought of his rich coffers, whose treasures were counted by tens of thousands, and for a moment the proud eye shone with its wonted brightness, and the old rich glow flushed up the cheek; but oh, how flitting! A soft, gentle zephyr sweeping o'er the meadow, and bearing on its wings the perfume of sweet-scented flowers came stealing mildly through the open window and lifted from his wrinkled brow a gray-grown lock. It cooled the glowing cheek, and the flush died out; for, again he was back in his crumbled castles. Oh, pity! pity, that such a sweet messenger should bear a whisper so full of sorrow. *Thou art alone.* Alone? Yes, alone! Alone on the wild sea of life tempest-driven. Like some great ship forsaken by its helmsman, and left to toss and drift with the breakers and go down with the storms, was he. Alone? Yes, abandoned in the full tide of his cherished prosperity; alone to the battle with a sorrow that was about to engulf him. Alone? Yes, alone! and staggering on down the hill-side of life with no faith to support, no hope to buoy, tottering blindly on to the eternal shore. What was the vast wealth for which he had toiled and striven? Around about him every where; but where, where the talismanic power which was to ward off evil, and which

was to aid in the realization of his fondest dreams? Where the boasted charm that, like Aladdin's lamp of Arabian legend, he was to use for the accomplishment of his ambitious schemes? Schemes, and plans, and hopes, that for twenty long years he had hugged to his bosom as his idol, yea as his God? The golden palace had been built; the lamp was there, but pride with his gilded trappings, like the peddler in the fable, had stepped in and stolen away the magic power. What was his wealth to him now? What did it profit? Naught, aye worse than naught; for, while it glittered and sparkled on every side, its glare only mocked him in the wretched loneliness of his heart.

His life had been spent in projecting schemes of ungodly ambition. To see his name ranked with the distinguished; to see it written on the scroll of fame had been the ruling desire of his soul, the study of his existence. Upon this he had relied for happiness, and he had never looked to any higher or holy source. About religion he had scarcely ever thought, and therefore when the breath of sorrow and disappointment had swept over his heart he was comfortless, for he had no Faith upon which to lean. And yet he was far from being positively wicked. He was only negatively good. Upon a bank of sand he had built his hopes, and we have seen the result. Before the first sweeping storm his castles had crumbled, and he was left prostrate. Just as he was about to reap reward for his toils and his pains in the realization of his dearest hopes, the cup was dashed from his lips, and its shattered fragments could never, aye never

be reunited. With a countenance expressive of unutterable anguish and despair, he turned from the window where he had sat for an hour and, taking with his trembling fingers a crumpled letter that lay on a table at hand, he read for the twentieth time the following:

BOSTON, MASS., June — 1875.

"MY DEAR FATHER. — I am impelled by a sense of duty to write this letter, that I may give you a brief explanation of the causes which led to my abrupt departure from your house — the home of my childhood. Yet, my father, I am far from being certain that this is necessary; for I hardly suppose that you will be at much loss to assign the reason for my conduct. If you are unhappy at my absence I grieve. If I have wronged you, I ask forgiveness. Could you see into my heart and know its wretchedness; could you see the future as it looks to me all clouded and darkened, without one single ray of glad light beyond the shadow to beckon me on; could you see the withered garlands, the blasted hopes and the broken promises of my youth, you would not feel indignant but would pity. Yet, amid the wrecks of all my own cherished dreams: amid the ruins of all my dearest hopes, and with all the pangs of my bitter disappointment, I have not forgotten you. Though by your own mistakes, and by your own hand, my life has been blighted, the poignancy of my grief is sharpened by the reflection that you are left alone, and probably need aid and sympathy. If this be the case I extend you that sympathy; and though, as I

just stated, my life has been poisoned through your instrumentality, I love you none the less therefor; because I know that you were blindfolded, as it were, and did not dream of the sad wreck your policy was working. That policy, (while I know it was honest and had for its intended object my welfare and advancement) was necessarily ruinous in its consequences, since it was founded on an ambition that was unrestrained and ungodly, and which would not have scrupled to sacrifice every earthly consideration — save that of honor itself — for the attainment of its end. But for this I would have been happy, aye more than happy, and my whole life might have been one almost uncheckered scene of light and gladness. *For this* I have been made miserable. Under its chilling blight, the sweet flowers of hope that bloomed fresh and radiant in my bosom have withered and died, and they no longer shed their sweet fragrance or their hallowed influence o'er my soul. By this, my present has been shrouded in gloom, my future rendered a hopeless blank, and the dearest and most sacred tie of my heart and of my life snapped asunder.

"Listen, father. You know Jeannette Evarts, you remember when she and I were children, and how we were wont to play together so careless and happy. Yes, you have not forgotten; and you noticed then the childish fondness that sprung up in our young hearts one for the other, in those beautiful innocent days, all gilded with sunlight and happiness. That childish affection grew upon us so that almost ere we had passed beyond the age of childhood it had strengthened into a

bond that could not well have been broken. We did not pause to analyze the feeling, for we were too young to understand its nature. We only knew that we loved each other, and this was enough.

"I went to college. Did I forget her? Instead, my love became an absorbing, but a holy passion, and Jeannette's bright image, ever with me, cheered me on in my arduous studies, and smiled approving smiles as I walked the paths of duty. I knew your ambition too, and I labored in order that I might not disappoint it. Even this was not so great a stimulus as the thought that I was, to some extent, making myself worthy of the artless young girl whom I had left behind.

"Three years went by, and their expiration brought me back to the home of my heart's happiness. Then the halcyon days returned, for I was with Jeannette again, and she proved the same pure child of nature, unchanged in aught save that she had grown fairer and lovelier with the dawn of womanhood, and she loved me as before.

"The days and the weeks and the months flew by on golden wings, and we were just as happy as if sorrow on this earth was unknown. Aye, we were happy; and I never dreamed that aught would come to break the beauty of the spell, or that a shadow would ever lower to dim the brightness of our way. Yet that shadow came. First a little speck, scarcely visible on the horizon of the future. Time developed it. Broader, deeper, darker it grew, until the whole sky was overcast, and the last ray of hope and happiness was

swallowed up in its gloom. I will tell you of it, and how it came. I had been at home several months, and, though I had been with Jeannette almost every day, I had never spoken of the passion that swayed my soul. It was on a lovely day in autumn that I strolled with her in a beautiful woodland where the rose vine was shedding its blossoms, and where the golden-tinted leaves were rustling with a music among the branches. We came upon a romantic spot, and there I sat with her, and for the first time I told her the story of my heart. I was loved. Can I ever forget my feelings? Never! I shall always look back to that period as the holiest and happiest of my life. I went to you, confident of your approval, and telling you all, I asked your sanction and blessing upon my engagement.

"You can have hardly forgotten the interview, so I will not repeat. Then it was that the first thorn sprang up in my Eden; then the first doubt crept into my mind; and, though for a time it awakened scarce an apprehension in my bosom, time proved it the mirror which reflected the shadow of coming events. It is not necessary that I should go into the details of the sequel. The subject is harrowing to me, and I desire to abridge. I am cognizant of all the plans and schemes which you adopted and devised for changing the current of my feeling, and for turning it into another channel.

"Yet I did not fully understand the *violence* of your opposition, and scarcely doubting that in time you would relent, and for other reasons which you probably would not appreciate, I kept Jeannette in ignorance of

that opposition which has proved the bitter curse of my life. Finally, sometime after the completion of my studies, when I had well-nigh despaired of your approbation, and had almost begun to realize the sad certainty that you would never yield, I determined to tell Jeannette all and to throw myself upon her generosity and her affection. For this purpose I sought her on the day prior to my trip to Virginia, but my firmness failed me when I would have done my duty. I came home from her that evening with the intention of appealing to you once more before I took the step that would probably part father and son forever. You had left home, and I found the letter that carried me with the Glennmores to Virginia. You cannot imagine how much I suffered in those days of doubt and suspense. That night, before my departure for Glennmore Place, I wrote at length to Jeannette what I had not had the courage to speak in words. I went on my tour through Virginia. You congratulated me. While with Miss Glennmore (fearing that she might place a wrong construction on my attentions to her), I told her of the engagement that existed between myself and Jeannette. I returned home and found on my arrival a letter from Jeannette. For your perusal, and yours alone, I enclose it. If I would mock my feelings I would say that I was miserable; and yet I did not entirely despair. I would not believe that Jeannette could drive me from her under any circumstances. I felt in my heart that she could not tear me from hers; and, with the facts before me, and in the face of the solemn and emphatic declarations of her letter, I sought her with the hope of changing her resolutions.

"In this I failed; and, in contemplating the wreck of my long-cherished dreams, I almost lamented the day of my birth. I returned home, and scarcely conscious of what I was doing or whither I was going, I wandered into the library. I am ignorant how long I had been there, or how I passed the time, but I remember at last of finding myself mechanically turning the pages of some book.

"A letter dropped therefrom. My attention was directed to its superscription, and what was my astonishment to find it addressed in your own hand-writing to Jeannette Evarts. My amazement was still further increased by reading the following endorsement, which I found on the back of the letter, and which I knew was written by her: "*From a sense of duty, I shall comply with the request herein mentioned, even though my heart may break in the fulfillment.*"

"I have hardly an apology to make for opening and reading the letter — *your* letter, father, to Jeannette. The story was all told now, and the last faint glimmering ray of hope fled my bosom forever. Oh, the wretchedness, the misery, the bitterness of that awful moment. In the delirium of my madness I almost hated you as the author of my being. It was only for a moment, and then your son settled down into a calm, hopeless despair, that saw no hope beyond, or this side the tomb. Even in that darkest hour of my soul's sorrow, my principal consideration was not of self. I thought of that tender, innocent, young being, who, from childhood's hours had given me her heart, and who had always loved me with so much confidence and trust.

"What should I do? Remain there amid those scenes to be ever mocked and cursed by the bright images of a past, that was forever buried save from memory? To have my mind and my heart continually haunted by the recollection of broken promises — promises that had been like dreams of heaven? Live near Jeannette, with the sweet history of our loves whispered in my ear by every gentle breeze that passed on perfumed wings, and told by every lovely flower, and sung by every happy bird that twittered in the leafy boughs, and still to know that she could never be mine? It would madden me. I resolved to abandon for ever the scenes of my happiness and of my despair.

"Next morning, I stole out from my chamber, and bent my steps toward a sacred, sequestered spot, down by the garden walls. There, alone by a marble tombstone that glistened among the shrubbery and the flowers, I knelt down by my sainted mother's grave and prayed that the pure Heavenly Spirit might watch over the wanderings of her wretched boy. A few hours later I had left behind me all that I had ever known to love, save some hallowed memories that will go with me down to the grave. I came here to Boston.

"While completing my law-studies here some time ago, I formed the acquaintance of a most estimable man — Dr. Colburn, of this city — who in time became very partial to me, and for whom I was soon cherishing a warm and cordial attachment. In the hour of my need and of my sorrow, I directed my steps to him and made known to him the story of my griefs — omitting

every thing which I thought might prejudice his generous heart against you — and I asked his sympathy. Noble man that he is, he threw his doors wide open to me, and called me 'brother, son.' I have been here only a few weeks, yet through his influence and through his friendly exertions, I am already beginning to get something to do in my profession, and I think the way will open to a fair competence if nothing more. This is enough. It is all that I desire, for my spirit is broken, and ambition is dead.

"I have finished. In writing this letter I have been actuated by a sense of duty. That duty, my father, I hardly need say has been to me a most painful one. I have been forced to dwell on memories that will ever cause my heart to bleed. How the theme has affected you I know not. I am not quite prepared to believe that you regard it as a matter of indifference or little consequence. Whether you have listened unfeelingly to my story of bitter griefs and blighted hopes; or whether your heart has given back a responsive sigh of sympathy to the wail of my own; whether you have (smothering all affection by the power of your inordinate pride) been indignant at my course; or whether (mindful of the tender love you had for the fair-haired child you used to tell me of) you have been made comfortless at my absence, my feelings for you are unaltered. And while I know that it has been through *your* mistakes that the noblest ends and aims of my life have been thwarted, and through *your* errors that all my fondest hopes have been blighted and my spirit crushed, still you are the same to me that you were in

the golden days of my happiness. Even though you cast me out from your heart, broken and disinherited, I could not forget that you are my father, and as such I will ever honor and love you.

"And now, before I close this letter, I would beg that if I have erred in my conduct towards you, you may forgive me. If you have committed any wrongs upon my feelings, I shall cherish no resentment. It is a matter of very great doubt whether or not I shall ever see you again. It is a matter of almost certainty that I shall never return home except under certain contingencies. If in the course of events — if in the vicissitudes of fortune, disasters should overtake you; if by a chain or combination of calamitous circumstances your riches were swept from you, and you were left to poverty and want; or if as unwelcome old age steals upon you, it should bring in its train infirmities and disease, and you should need a strong arm to lean upon, or a loving hand to minister, you have but to call and the response will be quick and willing.

"Yes, father, under such circumstances, you will find me ready to perform with cheerfulness and alacrity the affectionate offices and duties of a son, even as though nothing had ever happened.

"And now, with my most sincere and earnest wishes for your continued prosperity and health, and my prayers for your happiness, now and evermore, I bid you farewell.

"Your son,

"HENRY MELTON."

Cold drops of perspiration stood on the wrinkled brow of the old man, and his whole frame trembled, even to convulsion, with the unspeakable anguish of a broken heart.

"Help! Help me, oh, God!—God of earth, of heaven, of mercy—help me, or I sink beneath the weight of my burden."

It was the first sincere, heart-felt prayer that had ever come from the lips of that worldly man, and the soul's petition was heard at the Throne. God sent one of His blessed angels down to pour oil upon the troubled waters; but ere the silken wings could be folded about the troubled heart, the Spirit of Evil, unwilling to give his victim up without an effort to retain him, dispatched a counter-agent, and that agent was the same dark angel that had governed his life, and the demon's name was *Pride*. Then waged the contest between the angels of light and darkness, and the struggle was fearful; for an immortal soul was the wager of battle. The face of him in whose bosom the strife was raging, bore evidence of the fearfulness of that conflict between good and evil. The former was gaining the vantage-ground—good was prevailing. The fount of tears had been reached. Back, Satan, back! The Angel of Mercy was drawing nearer—and the silvery wings were beginning to shed a light o'er a soul that had ever been obscured in the gloom of sin. The dark angel was losing his hold; the sceptre he had wielded was about to be broken forever, when crying out to his master—the Evil One—for help, he

found a coadjutor at the very moment he was about to yield his sway. That coadjutor whispered:

"Edwin Melton, you are sick. Brandy! Brandy! Drink of this cup." And he in whose bosom the contest raged, tremblingly seized the tempter's proffered cup and —— drank a deep draught.

It was enough. The spirit of darkness had conquered in the strife.

CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER, DAUGHTER AND SON.

AFFAIRS at Myrtle Lawn wore an aspect that was far from pleasing. In addition to the continued absence of Horace Evarts, and the utter inability of his father and sister to hear any further definite news from him, there were other sources of trouble. For months past, Mr. Evart's pecuniary embarrassments had been increasing to an alarming extent. Finally his estate became so encumbered, and his finances so disordered, that he found it necessary to discontinue his mercantile operations. Even by the nicest management, he found himself barely able to meet all his obligations, and to retain possession of his rural home, with the prospect of a moderate income. These combined influences were assuredly sufficient to give trouble; but with his naturally happy and hopeful disposition, he might have withstood these without experiencing any very serious depression, had there not been yet another and a still greater cause of anxiety and care.

Ever since the unhappy interview with her lover, and his abrupt departure, Jeannette had felt that her despair and misery were complete; and though she bore up under her sorrow with a fortitude which was truly heroic, she could not be otherwise than all but miserable. What still further aggravated her unhappiness, was the reflection that Henry Melton must also

be miserable, and that she was the chief cause of his wretchedness. When she thought of this, and of the anguish depicted on his face when last she saw him, her courage declined, and the undermining influence of a passionate grief began to manifest itself in her general appearance. She lost her appetite; her sleep became feverish and uncertain; daily she grew thinner, and the soft, lustrous eyes, whence the warm love-light had been wont to beam, grew sad and tearful. The roseate tint of health and beauty was fading from the cheek; the step lost its elastic lightness, and the gently subdued voice was losing its music. As a matter of course, this change could not long escape the jealous watchfulness of her doting father, and it awakened in his mind the most painful apprehensions.

Two weeks had passed since Henry's departure, before Mr. Evarts had any suspicion of the true state of affairs. He knew that Henry was absent from home, and missed his daily visits to Myrtle Lawn; but supposed he had gone off on some business for his father, or on some pleasure trip. The young man's absence did not produce any feelings of mistrust in Mr. Evarts' mind, until it had been protracted to a period which gave little plausibility to the idea that it was associated either with business or pleasure. Mr. Evarts began to connect in his mind this sorrowful change in his daughter with young Melton's absence. The more he thought of it the more unaccountable did it all seem.

With a view of clearing away the unhappy mystery, Mr. Evarts sought his daughter one evening, some three

weeks after the period from which Henry's absence dated. It was about the hour of twilight, on one of the pleasant summer evenings, that Jeannette was alone in the drawing-room, and she was weeping. Upon her lap lay the last letter Henry had sent her — the one he had written her on the evening before he had started on his Virginia tour, and there were tear-stains upon it. Her mind had been going back over the past. She had been recalling so many tender memories, so many beautiful promises all gilded with the soft light of love and hope. All faded! All broken! All gone! The storm of sorrow was upon her. All about her everywhere was gloom and despair. Poor, gentle Jeannette. Poor, brave Jeannette. Her courage had forsaken her for the time, and her tears of the keenest anguish flowed unrestrainedly.

A hand was placed affectionately on her little head, and looking up, she beheld bending over her, her dear father. His eyes were filled with tears, and his face wore an expression of the deepest solicitude and love. Taking her hand within his own and seating himself beside her, he gently pushed the dishevelled locks from her fair brow, and looking into her tearful eyes, he asked:

"Why these sad tears, my darling daughter? Have you any hidden sorrows that I know not of? If you have, tell me, that your old father may sympathize with you, and share your burden."

"Are not my brother's continued absence and the knowledge that you are unhappy, sufficient causes for weeping?"

"Ah, little bird, there is something more behind. For several weeks I have watched you with the deepest concern. I have seen the bright glow fade from these cheeks, the rounded form losing its fullness, the tender light of the eyes dimming with unbidden tears, and have heard the voice of love and music sinking into subdued whispers, full of touching sadness. Ah! Jeannette, no sorrow can rest on this dear head without its being felt in my heart. Tell me what the great trouble is, that your moral strength and your heavenly faith cannot successfully combat."

Without a word, she took the letter from the folds of her dress where she had hidden it, and handing it to her father, she threw her arms around his neck and sobbed convulsively. He pressed the unhappy girl to his bosom, and after quieting her agitation, proceeded to read the letter. We will not attempt to portray his various emotions as he read it. Pity, grief, indignation, held alternate sway over his soul. Now his brow would contract with anger. A moment later, his face relaxing, would lose its sternness, and every feature soften with the utmost tenderness. For two or three minutes after he had finished reading the letter, he sat perfectly silent and motionless; then turning to Jeannette, asked in a slightly reproachful tone:

"My daughter, why have you thus long kept all this a secret from me!"

"Oh! dearest papa, please do not censure me!"

"Papa does not censure his poor, unhappy little darling. I could not find it in this old heart to reproach you for anything, even were you to deserve

censure; and in this case you do not. I was only grieved and hurt that you had been laboring under a load of sorrow to which your strength was unequal, and that you were struggling with it alone, without letting me carry a part of your burden."

"Oh, papa, I knew that you had troubles enough of your own, and did not wish to add to your unhappiness by revealing mine."

"Did you think that you could keep it hidden from me any length of time?"

"I did not think it impossible, papa; and for your sake I desired to do so."

"Did you not know that the protracted absence of Henry would awaken suspicions in my mind, and prompt a strict inquiry?"

"I thought each day, papa, that he would return. I had no idea whatever, that he would adopt a course so unwise, and one which was so calculated to increase the unhappiness of myself and all concerned. If he had remained at home, I had intended to account to you for the infrequency of his visits here, by telling you that I had broken off our engagement, hoping that further disclosure would not be necessary."

"Did you imagine, dear little child, that you could be miserable and I remain in ignorance of it: that this sad change in your manner and appearance could escape my notice?"

"I did not suppose that any perceptible alteration would occur; for I thought (relying on Him who doeth all things well) I had strength enough to enable me to bear up bravely under all the trials that would ever come upon me."

"Yet, Jeannette, you see that your strength has proved insufficient."

"Not insufficient, dear papa, for the pangs of my own disappointment and sorrow. I might combat these successfully, and bear with meekness and patience all my personal griefs and cares. It is the sorrow I feel in sympathy with the woes of others that has added an insupportable weight to my burden. Were you but happy, dear papa; were my darling brother only at home, with the dark shadow of sorrow removed from his pathway; were Henry cheerful under the blight of our heart-hopes, and did the world know Nora Lavine as I only know her, I could endure my heart's disappointment, and murmur not. While I could never escape the pangs which the memory of my broken love would bring me, I could live a life of cheerfulness — aye, even of happiness, if that happiness were in sympathy with the dear ones of my heart."

Mr. Evarts was about to make some reply, but was interrupted by the entrance of a servant who brought in the evening's mail. He received it; then turning to his daughter, said:

"My little girl had best retire now. Try not to be unhappy for my sake. Let us trust that the skies will grow brighter ere long."

The young girl arose, and bending over her old father, laid her face against his, and said: "One kiss, dear papa, and I will be better."

Mr. Evarts was engaged for some time looking over business letters and packages, before he came to one with an unknown superscription, bearing the post-mark of a city in France. It read as follows:

"My Dear Sir:—At the request of your son, and in accordance with my own views, I write. My name is Rosas, of the medical staff of General ——, of the army of Spain, and I am officially the attendant of Capt. Evarts, who has been made brevet-colonel for gallant and meritorious conduct on the bloody field of Mont-S——. The fact that I am in medical attendance upon him, need not cause you any serious alarm; for though he was painfully and dangerously wounded some five weeks ago, in a most heroic charge before the walls of our rescued city, and though for two weeks I had almost despaired of his recovery, he is now in a state of decided convalescence, and I think can at once proceed, without any danger, on his way to join you and his sister, of whom he has often spoken to me with the most touching tenderness. That Col. Evarts was wounded under any circumstances, was distressing to all: for every officer and soldier that knew him, loved the young hero. But the gallantry and daring displayed on the occasion—which will ever be memorable—almost buried sorrow and grief in wonder and admiration, and made him a mark of envy, not only to all his comrades, but also to his superiors. When I say 'superiors,' I mean superiors in military rank; for from what I have seen of him, Horace Evarts, in quite all other respects, has no superior.

"As a matter of interest and pride, I herewith send you the official account of the battle, clipped from a paper published at Madrid, containing a most complimentary mention of your son's name, and the part he acted on the bloody day. And while I know it can not

mitigate your sorrow at his past sufferings, it must elate your heart with pride.

"Col. Evarts' wound I found to be very dangerous. The ball entered the left breast just above the cardiac region, and ranging through the upper part of the lung, passed out near the spinal column. I thought from the beginning that his case was a most serious one, and required the greatest care to conduct it to a happy termination. Of course for some time after he received the wound, the depression was great from loss of blood; but as soon as the reaction came on, inflammation set in, and often during the greater part of a fortnight, he was in a delirium of fever.

"To give a detailed narration of the development and progress of his case would hardly be advisable, inasmuch as the relation would call to your mind his acute sufferings, and thereby give you additional pain. During your son's delirium, his mind generally dwelt upon his home, and oftentimes he would call, tenderly, the names of 'father, sister,' and as his face would light up with a smile, he would drop off into a refreshing slumber, from which, for the most part, he would awaken brightened and improved.

"At other times, however, during the highest stages of fever, I discovered that his thoughts turned upon some great real or imaginary disappointment of the affections. You may say that I should have closed my ears to the ravings which betrayed the hidden secrets of his heart; but my apology is that I felt it my duty, as his friend and medical attendant, to study the workings of his mind in order that I might, as far as

possible, divert it from thoughts which exercised a deleterious influence, and to turn those into a channel where healthy action might come into play. The mental and physical systems are so closely allied that influences operating on the one will almost certainly more or less affect the other. With this observation, I would enjoin upon you the necessity of keeping your son as much as possible from highly exciting influences, at least for a while, as any sudden very disturbing causes might force the blood so rapidly and violently to the wounded organ that hemorrhage might result, and if his life were not immediately endangered, his permanent recovery might be retarded.

"About a week ago, in obedience to instructions from General ——, after consulting with him, I started to attend your son in his journey homewards. Thus far he has stood the journey remarkably well, and has suffered no inconvenience or check in his convalescence. I do not think any danger now need be apprehended, as the greatest care will be taken of him, and we will travel no long distance at one time. My orders are to see him to Havre, and remain with him until I am thoroughly satisfied he can travel thence by steamer to New York without the slightest risk of endangering his life or health from the cause of his wound. When I bid Col. Evarts adieu at Havre, I shall place him in charge of friends, who will see that he has every attention during his voyage to New York. Of course he will inform you immediately of his arrival there.

"I do not know that I have anything further to say. Col. Evarts, with the tender care and attention which

he will receive when once at home, will, I have no doubt, entirely recover in the course of a month or two, and will be as strong and as healthy as if he had never received the wound which came so near terminating his life.

"And now, sir, with my congratulations on the additional honor conferred on your name by the gallant conduct of your noble son, and most ardently desirous of his very speedy and permanent restoration, and wishing you and yours long continued prosperity and happiness, I beg to subscribe myself,

"Yours very truly,

"C. Rosas, M. D."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HORACE EVARTS' RETURN.

IT was on a soft, balmy evening, in the month of August, that Horace Evarts, his father and sister, were engaged in pleasant conversation, out on the portico at Myrtle Lawn. Horace had been home only a few weeks, yet, thanks to the kind attentions and gentle nursing of his father and sister, had so much improved as to be able to stroll about the rooms of the mansion, and even to walk a little about the grounds without any assistance.

On this evening, in particular, there was a marked improvement in his feelings and appearance. He was gradually regaining his flesh; the fine color was coming back to the cheek; the dark eyes were beginning to shine with their old lustre; and, as he sat in the cushioned chair, with his sister standing behind him combing the black, curly locks from the high forehead, he looked something like the Horace Evarts we used to know, when hearts were light and the future full of promise. After a time, he said:

"There, little Sis, that will do. Put up your comb and brush now—but let me give you a kiss for being so good."

Jeannette received the kiss—looked pleased, and was doubly repaid for a service which had been to her a pleasure; then putting her arm around her brother's neck, she cried:

"Now I must give *you* a kiss for being so kind, and loving 'little Sis' so fondly."

Horace looked up at her with ineffable tenderness, then turning to his father, said:

"How would you and Sis like a ride this evening, father?"

"Nothing could possibly be more agreeable to me, my son; but I apprehend it might not be prudent for you to turn out quite yet. What think you?"

"Oh, I am well enough, and besides I consulted Dr. Llewellyn, this morning, on the subject. He told me if the evening was clear and pleasant, and I felt inclined to take a little exercise, the ride would in all likelihood prove beneficial."

"Then, dear papa, let us go by all means," cried Jeannette, who was pleasurably excited with the idea of once more riding out with her father and brother.

"Very well. You, birdie, ring the bell, and send orders to Casper for the carriage." Away flew Jeannette, like a birdie, sure enough, and singing just as merrily as she went.

In a few moments, a commodious open carriage appeared in front of the lawn gate. Horace, leaning on his father's arm, walked down the lawn avenue; while Jeannette ran gleefully on in front.

The trio having comfortably seated themselves, were soon driving rapidly through the village, and in a few minutes were out on the fine roads in the country. Here a great many things, calculated to charm, were presented to their view. Bright green meadows, whose verdure autumn had not yet touched, were ranged side

by side with broad fields of ripening grain, and formed pleasing features in the landscape. Hundreds of fine cattle grazed upon the wide valley extending from hillside to stream. Wild birds floated lazily on the waters, and the sky-lark, poised on golden wings, sang merrily. Here the scared hare leaped nimbly o'er the hedgeway, frightening a covey of birds, that flew from the underbrush to an adjoining copse. Now they would meet some pretty little country girl, with laughing eyes and bright locks straying from beneath a saucy little hood, carrying on her plump, half-bare arms a basket of grapes to the village market place. Or again, as they passed some neat, white cottage-home, they would be at a loss which most to admire — the beautifully arranged little flower-plots and white gravel-walks, or the fair-haired, happy children that played thereon.

Although it was a most pleasant evening for them all, none of them had passed as happy an hour for months. Jeannette, particularly, was almost jubilant. For a long while she had been brooding in secret over crushing sorrows. She had dwelt with the most painful emotions on the recollection of the despair and misery of one who had ever been, and still was dearer to her than all else on earth. Often, too, had she wiped the tears away that would gather, as she saw the expression of painful anxiety or sadness which so frequently rested on the face of her father. For the last few weeks, too, she had been closely confined, watching with unremitting vigilance and tenderness over a dearly beloved brother, whose condition had excited in her anxious mind the deepest solicitude.

For this hour, at least, the fetters were broken. Every thing unpleasant had for the time faded from memory's tablet. Jeannette, a pure, gentle child of Nature, full of love, surrounded by the beautiful, exhilarated by the fresh, pleasant air, and gladdened by the bright skies and the lovely landscapes, felt like a bird — as she was — just turned loose upon a beautiful world, after having gazed, for a time, through the bars of a darkened cage, to a lovely landscape of vines, fruits, and of flowers. For one short hour she was happy, and indulged her feelings unrestrainedly. Her laughter was as glad and as joyous as the liveliest strains of music. Her short snatches of song were tender or gay, and rivalled in melody and beauty the gladsome notes of the wild forest birds.

Mr. Evarts gazed upon the fair face of the radiant being before him, and his eyes filled with pleasant tears as he contemplated her happiness. The fond brother, rejoicing in her delight, forgot, for the time, every unhappy feeling, and enjoyed a sacred pleasure that he had not known for nearly a long, miserable year. Oh, pity, that he was soon to be reminded, and so cruelly, of that disappointment which had embittered his life. Pity, that the old man's cup of joy was so soon to be dashed. Pity, that the gladsome notes of the happy birdie were so soon to be hushed to silence, and that a cry of anguish was to be substituted for the music of merriment.

On their return, the party approached the village by a different road. Every thing went on happily enough until they had got within half a mile of the town;

when suddenly there was a marked change in the appearance of Horace. The dark eyes, which a moment before shone brightly, lost their lustre. The lips, which had just been uttering exclamations of pleasure, were now silent, and quivered with suppressed emotion. The cheek, which had been glowing with the flush of returning health, suddenly became of almost ashen paleness. Jeannette was the first to discover her brother's altered appearance, and looked up into his face with an expression of the most eager and anxious inquiry. He understood her uneasiness, and replied to her silent question by slowly raising his arm and pointing with his trembling finger towards the cottage of the Lavines, which now stood in full view, some few hundred yards to the right.

"Sister, what has become of —— of —— *her?*"

"She is there, brother, and well."—Jeannette might have stopped here, but she did not imagine what effect her words would have, nor could she have restrained the feeling which prompted her to impulsively add:—"And as guiltless as I am!"

His face was bloodless and marble-like, and, with a wild, almost meaningless stare in his eyes, he almost gasped:

"Who—says—so?"

"Be calm, my boy," said his father, who had become much alarmed at the tone and manner of his son. "Jeannette loves Nora Lavine, and her conclusions may be erroneous, as her judgment is biased by her affection. Yet, what she says may be true. There has been a very great reaction in the sentiment of the

people here, during the last six months, in favor of the unfortunate girl; and, though possibly many cling to the opinion that she is ——is unworthy, there are still very many who, taking the example of her outward meekness and piety as evidence of her purity and virtue, think as Jeannette does."

The face of the younger man manifested the intensity of his emotions, and his whole system was agitated with violent excitement. His father became painfully alarmed, and immediately sought to change the subject.

"Horace, Dr. Rosas is a noble man. I can never forget him for his kindness and his faithfulness to you. Have you written to him since you came home?"

"Yes, father, soon after my arrival."

There was a painful pause.

"What did you think of the official report which General —— gave of the battle of Mont-S——?"

"It was generally a faithful account."

"You really ought to feel proud indeed, to see your name so prominently in the report. He speaks of your bearing as gallant and meritorious in the extreme, and ascribes to you in a very great measure the success of the day. I tell you, Horace, there is not a nobleman in that Kingdom who would not be proud to call you 'son.' I am proud of you, my boy; but I have always been so, and I can not love you any more now than I have ever done. But see, we are entering the village."

The carriage had not gone the length of a square, before Jeannette, with dismay, saw Nora Lavine approaching from a direction which rendered a meeting inevitable. Nora, it was evident, did not recognize the

carriage, for when it came in sight, she merely glanced casually at it, and then continued leisurely twirling her sun-bonnet, and occasionally turning to say something to an attendant who walked behind, carrying in her arms some small bundles of merchandise just purchased in the village. Jeannette looked anxiously at her brother, and attempted to direct his attention to some object on the opposite side of the street. It was too late. Horace had seen *her;* his gaze was fixed upon the approaching figure, and his face was deathlike in its ghastly pallor. Nora raised her eyes; they met his; she started as if she had received an electric shock — was motionless for one instant — suddenly moved on, and was out of sight. All the blood in the body of Horace rushed upon his brain, his heart and his lungs. The excitement had been too intense. The wound was opened afresh. With a low moan, he sank back upon the pillows which supported him, and a crimson tide gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and dyed the pure white cases.

* * * * * *

Pale and almost breathless, Nora Lavine hastily entered her mother's chamber, at Elmwood.

"Mother, oh! mother," she exclaimed, "I have seen him."

"Seen whom? What is the matter, Nora?"

"*Him*, mother. He looked so pale, so sad, so wan, wretched, and so broken-hearted. And, mother, his look, though reproachful, was yet so full of pity — so full of forgiveness. Oh! mother, he still believes me the guilty outcast which the hateful world called me;

yet he has loved me so fondly, that he cannot find it in his heart to condemn; and though he knows that ever hereafter we are to be nought but strangers, still, mother, he loves me yet."

"And, my poor child, you love him too?"

"Love him? Have I ever ceased to love him, mother?"

"No; but I thought you had so far conquered your love as to be able to control your feelings."

"I had; but it was when I thought he despised me as others do: when I thought that his love for me was dead, forever dead. Mother, I would gladly die this hour, if my death would secure him happiness, and convince him of my innocence and my love."

"God help you, my darling Nora."

"Yes, mother, *God help me.* But has not my trial been enough? Will He never come? Will He never remove this cloud of shame that rests upon me? Oh! mother! how long — how long?"

"In His good time. Trust Him, Nora."

"Father, oh, Father, I believe. Help Thou me."

The young girl, with clasped hands, fell upon her knees, and raised her tearful eyes heavenward.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN LEGAL PRACTICE.

IN the city of Boston, away up Bruce street, quite removed from the noise, excitement, and hubbub of the business thoroughfares, stood the residence of Dr. Colburne. It was a quiet, peaceful, pretty home, making no pretensions to stately display. The house did not contain many rooms, and though there were no imposing surroundings or handsome statuary, the general appearance of the place was pleasing, and even inviting. The peculiar style of architecture, the beautiful verandas, almost hidden by flowery vines, the decorated yard, and pretty walks, combined to produce a pleasant and picturesque appearance. In the left front corner of the yard stood the very neatest little office conceivable. The painting was of snowy whiteness, relieved by the subdued green of the blinds.

In this office, before a table heaped with books and papers, on a morning early in September, Henry Melton sat. He had altered much since we knew him as a favored and happy lover. Upon the lofty brow now rested an unmistakable expression of profound melancholy. The eyes were bright, but it was a cold, feelingless lustre, and the cheek paler, and somewhat sunken. This change might have been the result of a sedentary mode of life, or of severe and continued application to study; but it would not have required

the penetration of a physiognomist to have discovered that Henry Melton had suffered greatly from some severe disappointment, over which he was secretly brooding. Yet he had asked for sympathy from one who knew all the story of the past; had asked that comfort and consolation which true friendship rarely fails to give. That sympathy had been freely given, and with grateful appreciation he acknowledged to himself that Dr. Colburne was the truest and warmest friend he had ever known.

Doubtless this was true.

In the darkest hour of his life, when the future seemed to Henry one cheerless, dreary, hopeless blank, and his heart was bowed down with its despair and misery; when he imagined himself a disinherited exile, and a wanderer on an unbeaten track, unable to turn back but pursued and driven onward by a remorseless agency; found his little barque driven by adverse winds from the haven where it had rested, and saw it drifting and being tossed about 'mid storms, upon an untried sea, with no helmsman to steer it off the shoals, and no friendly light-house to warn him of the breakers; not knowing which way to look for comfort or light, with his heart sinking within him, and hope about to abandon him forever to the gloom; he peered out through the storms and o'er the waters, and saw one little ray struggling with the darkness. The friendship of Edward Colburne proved the beacon-light to guide the lost one into port.

Doctor Colburne, though quite a young man, and barely known among men of science, had established a

most enviable reputation, was highly successful in his practice, and was popular and influential throughout the entire circle of his acquaintance. By the means of his profession he had already added largely to the handsome fortune he had inherited, and might have made much display, but his generous soul saw no pleasure in gilded show, and he preferred to spend the surplus of his income in deeds of charity and kindness. At the age of thirty-five, he was honored and loved, and besides this he was happy. Useful, honest, active and benevolent, and ever mindful of that Divine law, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," he had the inward consciousness that he was doing his duty to his God, to himself, and to his fellowmen.

Withal, his home was a little Eden. When the duties of the day were done, and he had, for a time, quitted the business-walks of his daily life, he would seek the rest and quiet of his home. There, surrounded by everything that was pleasing and elegant; with an amiable and attractive young wife, whose tender devotion was his soul's joy; and with two rosy-faced, silken-haired children climbing about him, while their joyous prattle was his heart's music, his hours passed in a domestic felicity that scarcely knew alloy.

Henry Melton entered this happy home as a friend and brother; and, unaccustomed as he was to such scenes of domestic joy, viewed the picture with strange feelings of mingled delight and sadness. Delight, because he loved Dr. Colburne, and he loved those whom he loved; and he felt the greatest satisfaction and pleasure in witnessing their happiness. Sadness,

because it suggested to him what a happy lot his own might have been; what blessings he, too, might have known had it not been for the fatal mistakes and the almost unscrupulous ambition of the one whom he was by duty and by nature bound to honor and love. Sometimes after looking upon this scene of holy affection he would be so forcibly and painfully reminded of the happiness he had once known, and of the feelings he had once experienced in anticipation of what the future had promised him, that he would retire to his room and, giving way to his emotions, would feel in all its bitterness the anguish of his disappointment, and beneath it was almost ready to sink. By powerful effort and determined will he managed to conceal these emotions from his friends, and when he appeared in their presence — after he had been with them a week or two — the only feeling which his countenance betrayed was delight in their peace and happiness.

Time passed on. As the weeks flew by, under the influences by which he was surrounded, young Melton's mind began to regain something of its former tone, and the violence of his feelings somewhat abated. He was far from being happy, and notwithstanding all the considerate and affectionate attentions of his friends, could not keep his thoughts from wandering back and dwelling almost continually on the memories associated with the name of Jeannette Evarts. Those memories could never be forgotten; those blighted hopes could never revive. The future held no promise; there was no ray on the horizon. He knew that he could never forget the past, would never cease to love, and yet he

had given up all hope of ever making her his wife; scarcely thought of ever seeing her again. His hopes were all broken: the past was all an unhappy dream.

He felt that his life had been a failure, and though the miserable fact was ever before him, he began to look upon the situation with calmness and fortitude.

He had been a member of Doctor Colburne's family about a month, and so preoccupied had been his mind that he had scarcely thought of the change in his pecuniary affairs, and had not realized the fact that in a short time he must either be a dependant on the bounty of his friend, or rely on his own exertions for a livelihood. Fortunately, he had an honorable profession, and he determined to try and make it a means of support. Out of the small sum of money he possessed, he proposed to supply himself with all the books calculated to aid him, and to use the remainder only in defraying necessary expenses. When he had matured his plans he made them known to his friend, asking his opinion and counsel. The unfeigned pleasure which Dr. Colburne manifested at the proposition was certainly not due to any considerations of selfish economy, for he loved Melton so much that he would gladly have given him a home in his family indefinitely, but because he foresaw, with ready sagacity, the good which must result from the execution of the plans proposed. He knew that active mental employment would be the means of diversion for Melton's mind, and that when he had once become deeply interested in the duties of his vocation, he would in a measure, forget his cruel disappointment, and be no longer a prey to the

tormenting memories which had threatened, not only to undermine his health, but almost to destroy his reason.

In a short time, through Colburne's aid and influence he had made every necessary preparation — had become acquainted with many prominent members of the bar, and, contrary to the experience of almost all young lawyers, found little difficulty in getting into a business, that from the very start promised well for the future. It is true that he did not enter upon his duties with that eagerness and earnestness which characterize an ardent, sanguine beginner, for he was almost entirely without that stimulus, ambition, which gives zeal to action. Still he possessed superior talents; and, though his labors now were chiefly mechanical, they were steadfast and untiring, and looked to the future for fruitful results. He devoted himself to his studies and his practice with assiduity, not so much with any desire to acquire fame, or to attain prominence, as that the active employment of his mental faculties afforded some relief to his mind, which otherwise would have been almost continually racked with the torturing memories of blighted hopes.

He had been with Dr. Colburne about three months, when we find him one evening — as stated at the beginning of this chapter — seated at his desk, with his thoughts fixedly engaged on a complicated case, which had recently been entrusted to him. So deeply intent was his mind on the business before him, that a hasty tap at the door was twice repeated, before it attracted his attention. At last when he opened the

door, a messenger appeared, who thrust into his hand a slip of paper, on which were the following lines, evidently written in much haste:

"DEAR HENRY.—You are needed in your professional capacity immediately. The case I spoke to you of last night (in which a man was shot by the brother of a lady whom he had ruined) is about to terminate fatally. The wounded man cannot possibly live more than a few hours. He knows this, and appears anxious to make a deposition before he dies. I have sent for an officer, in the presence of whom the declaration must be sworn to; and it is necessary for one of your profession to do the writing. Come immediately to room 50, second floor, Hotel Auverne.

"Yours &c.,

"ED. COLBURNE."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A REPROBATE'S CONFESSION.

AT the Hotel Auverne, in a handsomely furnished apartment, where various articles of a gentleman's toilet and some pieces of jewelry lay upon the marble slab of a splendid bureau, were gathered three men around the bedside of one who, there in the mellow, golden light, lay dying. He could not have been more than thirty-five years of age, this dying man. He might have been younger, for it was apparent that he was vastly changed from what he must have been in health, so that it was impossible accurately to guess his age. There was no mistaking the fact, however, that he had been strikingly handsome. His features, now perfectly pallid, were still regular and attractive, and though much contorted now, must once have been in beautiful harmony with each other.

Long, black locks, dishevelled by his restless movements, lay scattered over the pillows, and the dark eye, though clouded by his rapidly approaching dissolution, was still brilliant enough to have told the looker-on that its light had once wielded a power for good or evil. The dying man seemed to suffer no physical pain, but the expression of his face revealed the utter hopelessness of the heart, and the acute anguish of anticipated torture.

At the foot of the bed, a civil officer, utterly

unmoved, stood gazing at this picture of horror. Perhaps he had witnessed such scenes before. At a table near by, sat a young man with portfolio, pen and ink before him. He looked upon the face of the dying man and — shuddered. By the side of the bed a kindly looking man was standing. In one hand he held a glass containing some fluid; the fingers of the other rested upon the pulse of him whose hours evidently were numbered. It was the physician, whose skill had failed him here; he was counting the heart's pulsations.

"Are you sufficiently composed, think you, to say what you desire?" he inquired.

"As composed as I shall ever be. At any rate, let me begin. Let the last act of my life be one of reparation. Probably it may save me one torture in that world where I go to suffer the penalties of crimes committed in this. Swear me, Magistrate."

The officer administered the oath.

"Are you ready to take down his words, Mr. Melton?"

"Ready," was the scarcely uttered response, when the dying man, with a sudden effort, rose up in bed, and exclaimed:

"Melton, Melton, did you say? Are you Henry Melton of the village of ——, near Baltimore, in Maryland?"

"I am; and in the name of Heaven, who are you? It strikes me I have seen that face before, all changed though it be; and the voice, sounding so strangely familiar to my ear, has touched a chord in my memory."

"You shall know directly. Enough for the moment,

that there is only one other man on earth whom I would rather see now than you."

The Doctor administered a spoonful of the medicine he held, and then bade the dying man make the declaration he desired.

"It would be a painful duty, under other circumstances," he thus began, "that urges me now to make a revelation, which will necessarily render my name detestable to good men. But why should I be deterred from its performance by any sentiment of shame, when in a few hours I shall appear before that dread Tribunal, before which all others sink into mere nothingness. I propose to be brief. My name is Eldred Randal. I was born in 1842, in a town about a hundred miles from the city of New York. I never knew a mother, for in giving me existence she ended her own. My father, who was a kind-hearted, generous man, was wealthy and highly respected in the community in which he lived. Owing to the sad circumstances connected with my birth, and also to my father's affectionate and indulgent nature, I was much petted, and he was possibly more fond of me than he was of his only other child — my brother. At any rate, when I was ten years old I was willful and spoiled, knowing scarce any authority or law but my own inclination. When I was nearly sixteen and my brother was almost twenty, our father died, and we were left almost alone in the world, with very few kindred, masters of ourselves and our actions, with a joint inheritance of sixty thousand dollars. Having from earliest childhood been accustomed to do as I

pleased, without restraining influence of any kind, and being of a quick, sociable and impulsive temperament, it is not much to be wondered at that I had, even at that early age, formed associations and contracted habits which proved the foundation of my future ruin, and brought me here — where you see me now.

"It is not my purpose to show how step by step I descended the ladder that leads to the pit, and was gradually drawn into the net-work which the devil spreads out for the children of men. At eighteen years, I was a profligate spendthrift, and at twenty-one, an unprincipled libertine, who had squandered two-thirds of his inheritance in gambling, in dissipation and in amorous intrigues. About this time, my brother, who had joined the army and was an officer fighting the Rebels out in the South and West, was killed; and, inheriting his property, I was again rich. Instead of reforming my life, I plunged more recklessly into the vortex of madness and ruin. My conscience was silent. I had made it callous by repeated sins. I thought it was silent forever; and I rejoiced that I was no longer to be annoyed by its upbraidings. I was mistaken; it only slumbered; but it slept so deeply that it required a powerful agent to awaken it. Yet it did awaken, and the Angel of Mercy gave me still another warning ere He left me to myself. I became truly enamored of a most beautiful young maiden, and I loved her with a purity and purpose I had never known before. Her life was as fragrant and as beautiful as the flowers that she twined in her golden hair. She was as guileless and as innocent as the heavenly

angels, whose prototype she was. Irene — heaven-sent Irene — loved me as tenderly as I loved her, gave me all her confidence, and trusted me with her life and with her honor — what else could she give me but her soul? Had I followed honor's impulses and my own inclinations, I should have married her, and in all probability would have been a better and a happier man. But she was poor and of plebeian birth, and had nothing to recommend her save purity, beauty, innocence and a fair name. My companions laughed me to scorn for the idea of making her my wife, and called me fool for not enjoying the privileges of a husband without in reality becoming one.

"We were never married. She — Irene, heaven's last messenger to my soul — died; died with a broken heart, dishonored, ere her unborn child could curse its father with the first wail of existence. I heard it all. I knew who the damned demon was that had wrought the ruin. Lord, what wretchedness! Lord, what harrowing thoughts seized upon me! It was the greatest of all my crimes, and when I realized it in all its enormity, I was stricken dumb with terror. I wept and grieved, and resolved henceforth to lead an upright, virtuous life; and to atone, as far as I was able, for the errors and crimes of the past. My penitence did not last long. My courage, in the midst of old associations, gave way. In my old haunts my firmness failed me. An invisible hand led me back out of the paths I was feebly endeavoring to tread, and again I was in the world's fair garden, where lovely flowers concealed the poisonous fangs of hissing

serpents, and where siren-voices lulled the charmed one on to death. I gathered the fruits that lay in my way, and greedily devoured them.

"Sometimes conscience came *tremblingly* with soft whispers, but I shouted 'silence' and the devil echoed 'SILENCE.' Angels, weeping, came down from above, and with outstretched hands, imploringly, would beckon me back from the pit whence my feet were standing. I shut my eyes upon the vision of mercy, and the devil kept them closed.

"From that time I was *his*, and with him I made a covenant. Have I not been faithful to it? Ha! ha! ha!"

At this stage of the narration, the feelings of the dying man were worked up to such a degree of excitement, that he was unable to proceed. His language became incoherent, and entirely irrelevant, and he broke out into peals of wild demoniac laughter. For some minutes, Henry Melton — who had become deeply interested in the relation, and who had from the beginning been impressed with an intuitive presentiment that with this man's story hung the weal or woe of some whom he loved, and probably with his own destiny — was in dreadful suspense, lest the doomed man should die in this state of delirium, or that his reason would not be restored in time for him to make further disclosures. He cast an uneasy and inquiring look at his friend, Dr. Colburne, who replied to the mute gaze by saying:

"Be easy, Henry, the paroxysm is nearly over."

And so it was. In a few moments the wild expression faded from the dying man's face and gave way to

the light of restored reason. Henry felt relieved of a terrible suspense when he heard the sufferer, in a calm, steady voice, say:

"My mind has wandered, has it not, Doctor?"

"Yes," returned the physician, "you were delirious a few moments, but you are much better now."

"Doctor, do not let me fall into that condition again. How long have I yet?"

"Possibly two or three hours; but I would advise that you be as laconic as consistent with your purpose. If you recollect where you were interrupted, you can resume now."

"Let me see. Oh, yes, I remember well enough. Well, after this, my whole life was one tissue of falsehood and villainy. I need not enter into its details. They would not aid my efforts in attaining the end at which I aim. I could give every incident of my life, and every crime I ever committed against innocence and virtue, for they all appear before me now in their most hideous deformity in this terrible hour of my doom. A recital of them would do no good. The hour of atonement is for ever gone. I can not now make any amends. There is one case, however, that I can set right. One case that lies shrouded in mystery: that has blighted the happiness of more than one heart. That mystery it lies with me alone to clear away. I would do so before I die, and to that end I am drifting."

There was a slight pause, and the speaker's eyes turned upon Henry Melton, who, with nervous impatience, cried out: "Go on! go on!"

The dying man resumed:

"As I said, my whole life became a tissue of falsehood and crime — a war against virtue, both in man and woman. I revelled in luxury by impoverishing the one at the gaming table, and feasted my carnal soul by poisoning the lips of the other through the base arts of the seducer.

"You shudder, Doctor? Well you may. I have seen others do the same. Not as you, but even as I do now as I stand upon the brink of the awful abyss, and gaze into the burning gulf beyond. Doctor, give me more of your medicine."

The physician administered the soothing potion, and the narrator went on: —

"Henry Melton, are you attentive? Listen well."

"In mercy, go on."

"Something near a year ago I went to your town, I had a diabolical purpose in view when I made the visit; but when I went there I had no designs at first against some for whom my coming boded evil. Doctor, I am sinking rapidly. Give me brandy."

"In God's name, Doctor Colburne, if you love me, help him," said Melton, with a face as pale as the dying man's.

"Be calm, Henry," was the quiet response. In a few minutes the dying man revived a little and went on:

"You know Nora Lavine, I believe she was your friend; was she not, Melton?"

"Eldred Randal, in heaven's name, I pray and beseech you go on with your story."

"I met her," continued the speaker, "and was struck

with her beauty; and with my prompter — the devil — at my back, I determined to add another to my list of victims."

"Villain," involuntarily muttered Henry Melton between his set teeth. The other paid no heed to the interruption, but continued:

"Chance gave me a most favorable introduction. You have not forgotten the rescue at the river, have you?"

"No, I have not forgotten it. Are you MacKenzie?"

"That is the name you know me by. Yes, Melton, I — Eldred Randal, was the MacKenzie who came like a serpent in your midst to poison the cup your young hearts were quaffing. I, Eldred Randal, was the MacKenzie who saved Nora Lavine from a watery grave, in order that I might consign her to a living tomb; a tomb more dark, by far, than any she could have found beneath the waters that would have engulfed her. I had gained her gratitude and her mother's by my timely assistance, and they made me a welcome visitor at their happy home. To win her friendship and confidence was my first step. Under the peculiar circumstances it was no difficult task. By plausible lies I deceived her, and I worked upon her sympathies by a well-concocted story about a common martyrdom of her father and my brother. She can tell you all this. You now know what part my brother took in the struggle in which her father lost his life. She had no means of knowing better then, and with childlike faith she accepted my words as truth, and gave me her full confidence and sympathy. Ah, Melton, she was

standing on slippery ground just then, and had not Heaven shielded her, would have glided into the gulf; not the gulf probably that awaits me now with its burning lava, but the gulf of desperate sin and shame which so generally finds outlet into this other.

"About this time, young Evarts, her lover, had occasion to be absent from home for a week or two. I fully intended to accomplish her ruin in his absence, so that when he returned he would have a withered rose for his bosom. But as I said, angels kept their ceaseless vigils o'er her. As soon as Evarts left, Nora declined to see me any more. Nothing daunted, I followed my intended prey, and was made the more determined on the accomplishment of my purpose. By flattery, promises and money I managed to enlist in my cause the services of the maid-servant Bessie. From her I learned that Evarts, suspecting my character and designs, had exacted a solemn promise of his betrothed, on his departure, that she would not see me during his absence. As far as she was able to comply, she was faithful to her promise. For several days I haunted the neighborhood. I vainly called at the cottage. I hovered like a bird of prey about the places where she had been accustomed to stroll. She did not appear. In vain I sought her. I saw that she was determined to keep inviolate her promise to her lover. I directed Bessie to tell her that I had gone away. The *ruse* worked well. Next morning my abettor came and gave me the intelligence that her mistress had gone out for a walk, and designated the place I would be likely to find her. I lost no time, and soon startled her with

my presence. When her surprise and excitement somewhat abated she became indignant, and demanded the reasons for my intrusion. I fell upon my knees before her, and poured out a long pathetic story. It would have moved a much colder heart than hers. From her it drew tears of pity and sympathy. As she started to return to her home it was simply impossible for her to refuse my escort. She was evidently very unhappy. As I bade her adieu at the cottage gate, I asked permission to call to see her. The request embarrassed her deepily. She hesitated. I appealed to her sympathies. She tremblingly replied that I might call the next morning. After I left her I thought on the situation. I understood how delicately sensitive she was to right and wrong. I knew she was miserable in having violated her promise to her lover. I knew that in her confused and unhappy state of mind she would overlook the fact that the broken promise was no fault of hers, and would imagine she had done very wickedly. This was what I desired. I wanted her to be crushed with a sense of secret shame. On the morrow that shame would fasten itself upon her, for I should see her by her own permission, and the violation of her promise would then be voluntary. There was only one thing I feared. It was that she would disclose the situation to her mother, and seek her counsel. Yet I was quite sanguine that shame would influence her to keep her secret. If she would only do this my task would be an easy one. If she would only see me on the coming morrow, I knew what would follow. The next step would be a clandestine meeting. She would

be overwhelmed with shame, and made an unresisting victim. She would have had no more power to repel me then than a helpless infant would have to resist successfully the physical strength of a giant.

"I was doomed to an unexpected check. That evening the maid-servant came to my rooms and told me a long conversation which had taken place between the mother and daughter. Nora had revealed all, and sought her mother's advice. The mother's suspicions were aroused. She advised her daughter to write me a note withdrawing the privilege she had given me of calling, and denying me, in positive terms, her presence for all future time. She also advised the writing of a letter to Horace Evarts, giving him a detailed account of the whole affair. Immediately she wrote the letters which were given to Bessie to carry to the post office. The girl brought them to me instead. Both of them *are there now in my trunk in the bottom right hand corner, folded in a buff-colored envelope which has on its face three cross marks.*

"With those two letters is another. It was written by Evarts to his betrothed, and was intercepted on the same occasion, and through the same means that her letter to him was. Neither party has ever seen the other's letter. From his, I learned that he would be at home the next Sunday at a certain hour; that he would seek her first at the church where she was accustomed to attend, and if there he found her not he would go immediately to her home. Give me more brandy, Doctor, my strength is almost gone."

Doctor Colburne administered the cordial, and made

him pause a minute. The dying man regained his breath and continued:

"I knew something of Evarts' impulsive nature. I must drive him into a state of frenzy and despair. He must be made to believe that Nora was faithless — aye, guilty of crime. He must be driven away from the scene. I had little trouble in imagining her misery and despair if this could be done. She would go with me to any part of the earth so that she was but leaving a home where every one believed her dishonored. I laid my plans accordingly. Nora must not go to church. She always went; her failure to go on this particular occasion would be a strong link in the chain of evidence against her. I procured a drug which taken over-night would produce nervous headache in the morning. I directed Bessie to put it in a cup of tea or coffee for her mistress. I knew well the medicine would have the desired effect. After the mother went out to church, I was to hide myself in the shrubbery close to the cottage. Bessie was to occupy a position at a window which commanded the entire walk from the church to the cottage. She was to watch for the approach of Evarts, and signify the same to me by waving a white handkerchief. Everything worked well. The mother went to church alone, Bessie occupied her position at the window, I, mine in the shrubbery. I saw the white signal from the window. I emerged from my hiding place, and hurried to the cottage. I— paused—not—at—the door. More brandy, Doctor— demons of darkness! away —."

The physician applied the stimulant, and though it

appeared as if the end had almost come, the dying man went on:

"Of course, Nora was utterly confounded and terrified at my presence. She would not listen to me one moment. Excitedly but peremptorily she ordered me to leave her presence. Her excitement got beyond all control. She tried to call for assistance to force me away from her sight. She tried to fly past me. I placed myself between her and the door, and caught her in my arms. Her excitement had reached its climax. She fainted on my bosom. At this juncture I heard the sound of approaching footsteps; in — a — moment more — Evarts approached. Tell him what I've told you, Melton. He knows all the rest. Don't ask — Nora — Lavine — to for—give me, Melton, because *she* — cannot do it. Tell Horace — Evarts — will you — tell — him — Melton, what I've said?"

"Yes, yes! Randal, I will tell him all. Let me ask you one question and heaven help you to answer it rightly. How do you explain the mystery connected with the note which you handed to Horace Evarts, when he threatened you with death on his entrance to the scene you last described?"

"The note, ah yes — the note — that — note — was not for — me. It was — the closing — lines of — her — let—ter — to him. The closing lines — of her letter — to Horace Evarts — the intercepted letter. You — know there in — my trunk — four pages closely — written — finished on that slip, as a postscript. I took out — the letter — she wrote — me — and — substituted that — slip."

"Then Nora Lavine is guiltless?"

"As guiltless — and as — pure, so far as my knowledge goes, as — the angels of heaven. I, Eldred Randal, heretofore known to you as MacKenzie — swear it on my dying bed — in the presence of God."

"I felt it; I knew it," exclaimed Melton, "and I thank God that the proof of her innocence is established. Eldred Randal, you suffer deservedly, but may heaven have mercy on you for this last act of your life."

"Amen," responded Dr. Colburne.

"Too late," muttered the dying man. "Too late," he almost shrieked. "Doctor, Doctor, save me from them. Away, ye spirits of the damned! Irene — Es — telle —— Adora — thou art — avenged."

Eldred Randal sank back upon the pillow, and the glassy eyes were fixed in — death. He had not signed the confession, but it had been made before a civil officer, in the *presence of lawyer and physician*, and thus was a legal instrument.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SUMMONS HOME.

WHEN events crowd themselves in rapid succession upon each other, it is sometimes difficult for the writer to record them in their proper order.

Henry Melton had not left the bedside of the dead MacKenzie a sufficient length of time to enable him to compose his mind, and arrange his plans of actions, when a letter was handed to him which was destined to change the whole tenor of his life.

It was postmarked at his own native village, but the handwriting in the superscription was unknown to him. He hastily opened it and read the following:

"Sept. —, 1875.

MY DEAR SIR: — I write to you by your father's directions. He is now prostrated on a bed of illness, and desires your immediate attendance. His health for many weeks has been gradually declining, but none of his friends were seriously apprehensive of danger until about twelve hours ago, when he was stricken down with paralysis. This painful intelligence will naturally cause you intense anxiety and uneasiness, but I beg you to restrain your feelings, and let us hope for his early restoration.

"There is one fact connected with his illness that I will mention here, and I doubt not that it will afford

you some consolation and sincere gratification. It is this: Ever since this decline in your father's health began, a gradual change has been going on in his religious views and feelings, until at last he has been entirely transformed into a new being, and resolved on practising as well as professing the christian faith. He desires me to state this to you, and to express the hope that you will blot from your memory all the sufferings which his errors of judgment have caused you to undergo. He now clearly sees the mistakes which he committed; and knowing the warm dutiful affection you have ever entertained for him, is desirous of making every practicable amends.

"Without any solicitations from me, I know that you will hasten to him with all dispatch; for I do not deem it out of place for me, as his medical attendant and adviser, to state that your speedy return, in my opinion, will add greatly to his chances of recovery, which otherwise would be exceedingly doubtful.

"With much respect,

"Yours truly,

"RICHARD LLEWELLYN, M. D."

"P. S.— I would state for your pleasure that your old friend, Horace Evarts is still at home. He returned, as I suppose you already know, some month or six weeks ago, suffering from a terrible wound which he had received in one of the battles between the Carlist forces and the regular troops in Spain. He has now almost entirely recovered; in fact, I think him quite as well as ever, except that he is still somewhat thin, and suffering from a heavy depression of spirits — the

result of the bitter disappointment he experienced a year ago in his unfortunate love affair, the memory of which still clings to him with a cruel tenacity, poisoning almost every spring of hope and happiness. Mr. and Miss Evarts are generally well, though the latter has been very much depressed of late. "R. L."

If Henry in his confused and excited state of mind, consequent upon witnessing the horrible death-bed scene which he had but a few hours left, had been at a loss what course of action to pursue, this letter would have decided him instantly. In a few hours, he had bade a fond and tearful adieu to the dear friends whose loving kindness would be a holy remembrance to him as long as his life might last, and by morning's dawn was out on the boundless ocean again, gazing o'er the broad expanse of waters from the deck of the very same vessel which bore him once a hopeless and heart-broken exile. It was Night then; night to the material world; night to his life. Darkness was upon the waters, and darkness upon the heart of him whose eyes were then turned upon them.

It was Morning now. Morning upon the waters; and in the glad golden light of the rising sun they sprayed, and danced, and sparkled. Might not the heart's morning too be about to break? Henry fixed his eyes steadily upon the horizon of the future, and caught a glimmer of the first gray dawn. God speed him on his mission of mercy and love. God make the morning's dawn early and bright.

CHAPTER XXX.

RECALLED AND RECONCILED.

INSTANCES are rare in which a man who has carelessly lived nearly three score years, who has been governed in his actions by some ungodly passion from early manhood to hoary age; who, having scarcely a thought of his soul's immortal welfare, makes the honors and pleasures of this world his life's study and pursuit; and pride, and wealth, and ambition his only gods — we say it is a rare instance in which a man of this character after walking up the hill-side of life, gathering only the fair flowers and fruits by the way, and then going on down the declivity until he had almost reached the valley beyond, pauses in his course, sees the error of his way and looks to find the narrow path that diverges from the easier and broader road.

Yet, such was the case with Edwin Melton. After having following for nearly half a century his ignis fatuus — Ambition; when his trembling form was tottering on the brink, Providence worked mysteriously for him. Had his worldly wishes been all fulfilled, had his son Henry in accordance with his father's desire, married Ellen Glennmore, the old man, whose heart was now at peace with God and man, would in all probability never have awakened to a sense of his

spiritual danger, until it was too late to hope for succor. As it was, the cherished dreams of his life were all broken at a blow; his pride was buried in deep humiliation; a new light broke in upon his soul, a light that heralded the coming of a brighter and a happier day. He had been thoroughly transformed.

From the worldly-minded man who had ever worshiped at the shrine of earthly honors, who had scarcely ever looked beyond the tomb, or thought of future rewards and punishments, he had been changed to the meek and lowly Christian, resigned to God's will, and ready for His call.

* * * * * *

Two days had barely passed since we left young Melton on board the steamer homeward bound.

It was evening, and the hour early twilight when he ended his journey, and found himself once more at Melton Mansion. We will not attempt to depict his emotions as once again he crossed the threshold of that home which he had supposed he would never more behold. He did not pause, however, to indulge his feelings, but hurried on; and meeting no one in the passage or hall, went immediately to his father's bedchamber, and without hesitation entered unannounced. He moved softly to the bedside, and gently taking his father's hand pressed it to his lips. The old man started from a light slumber in which he had fallen, and after looking about somewhat confusedly, at the objects grown indistinct in the thickening twilight, said:

"Ah, Yes! Doctor Llewellyn. I see now. It is nearly night. Well Doctor, I am decidedly better now. I have had a sweet sleep, and the fairest visions that ever I knew. Do you think that Henry will come to-night?"

The son rose from the side of the bed where he had been kneeling, and as a warm tear-drop fell upon the old man's brow, bent over him, and with a voice trembling with emotion, said:

"*I* am here, dear father."

"Is it you, my boy, or do I still dream?"

"It is I, your son, come at your bidding, to watch over, to love you, and to honor you."

The old father's voice was choked with emotion, and his eyes were filled with tears, as he said:

"Come closer, Henry. There; now, may the merciful God of Heaven bless you, my son, for evermore."

Henry could make no reply. After a short silence, the old man gained some command over his feelings, and again spoke:

"My son, can you forgive all the past errors that caused you so much suffering?"

"Father, they are already forgiven."

"Forget the wrong I committed against the holy love you bore to — to — another?"

"Yes, father, forget all but the fond and dutiful affection I cherish for you. Whatever you have done I know was done with the desire of promoting my happiness, and if you erred in the manner of doing this, the error was of the judgment and not of the

heart. Compose your feelings, my dear father, and be assured of my fondest and most dutiful affection."

Neither spoke for a minute. The father was the first to break the silence.

"Henry, do you still love Jeannette Evarts?"

"Father!"

"I understand, my son. Go, seek her, Henry."

"And leave you so soon?"

"I am better now, my son, and my heart needs only one thing more to make its joy complete."

"Can my actions add that other?"

"I trust so. Go, Henry. Seek Jeannette. Tell her that you came from me to crave her forgiveness for the pangs of bitter sorrow I have caused her. Beseech her in mercy's name to forget them, and tell her that I want her love. Ask her, Henry, to be my little daughter, to link her destiny with yours, and then my path to the tomb will be a pleasant way."

* * * * * *

The last time we saw Jeannette was on the occasion of the ride which terminated so unhappily for them all. We saw her then when her spirits were in the height of pleasurable excitement; saw her when those spirits were rudely and cruelly shocked, and her mind filled with grief and terror by an incident which nearly threatened the life of an only brother whom she loved with excessive fondness.

After this, her feelings had never reacted, though her brother experienced no constitutional injury from the hemorrhage, and rapidly recovered his strength and

health, and though assured by Dr. Llewellyn that the hemorrhage proved a decided benefit, since it relieved a slight congestion that had take place about the lung, the shock that Jeannette had sustained had been so severe that she was unable to recover any degree of cheerfulness, and lived constantly in dread of a repetition of the attack.

There were other causes, too, operating on her mind which were well calculated to still further depress her. She had seen the strength of the passion which her brother had for Nora, and felt convinced it would never alter or abate. This passion she now regarded as utterly hopeless, and saw nothing in it but a life-time of sorrow and disappointment. She believed fully and firmly in Nora's absolute purity and innocence, but had almost given up all hope that the proof of that innocence would ever be established.

There was another — must we say a still greater — cause of trouble to her mind. Until recently, she had fondly hoped that Henry Melton would soon return to his home, and, after his long absence, be able to bear with firmness and fortitude his great disappointment, and would in the coming time so far forget the love he had cherished for her as to be justified in making another his wife. (That "another" could not now be Ellen Glennmore, for that light-hearted young lady had recently married a New York banker, and was very happy in her splendor.) From the time Henry had left home, Jeannette had heard nothing from him. She did not imagine any person in the village knew of

his whereabouts; much less did she suppose that his father had the remotest idea as to where he was.

She heard from Melton Mansion but seldom of late; and though she knew of the declining health of its owner, did not fully know what the chief cause had been, and supposed him still proudly inflexible, not being aware of the spiritual change that had taken place in him.

From what she had learned within the past few days, she imagined his dissolution was near at hand, and, thinking him still the worldly man he had ever been, she contemplated with grief and horror the prospect which she feared lay before him beyond the grave. To die alone as he was — separated from the dearest tie he had on earth, his son — and that son driven as it were from his home, chiefly if not wholly by *his* mistakes, was cause for the deepest sadness. To die thus unprepared was terrible. Jeannette, loving Henry as she assuredly did with all the purity and strength of her soul, and feeling that that love was worse than hopeless, concealed in her bleeding heart her own cruelly blighted love, and suffered almost as much for others as she did for herself.

The September evening was mild and pleasant. Jeannette was seated alone at one of the vine-latticed ends of the portico that extended along the front of the mansion at Myrtle Lawn. The shades of twilight had deepened almost into darkness, and the last gray lines of the departed day were fast fading from the western horizon. The full silvery moon was up in the east and

was shedding her pale lustre over the shrubbery on the lawn and through the nearly leafless branches of the tall old trees. Soon, too, the blue expanse was filled with myriads of the lesser lights, and Jeannette watched their merry twinkling. Her heart was full of sadness. Upon her mind had crowded the blissful memories of other days, and her pure, tender heart beat for the moment with the olden joy. Then — the present. Its gloomy realities loomed up before her, and Jeannette bowed her head with the weight of its sorrows.

For half an hour she sat thus, with her poor heart heavy with its woes; and then, there by the woodbine, in the moonlight's broken rays, she fell upon her knees, and, raising her clasped hands and tearful eyes towards the glowing heavens, sent up her petition. The voice was low, sweet and touching, and it came from the depths of a soul that was white and pure.

"Oh, God, bring him back. In thy mercy and love bring him back. Reconcile the father and the son, and bless them both in time and in eternity."

If loveliness in human form can possibly approximate that superlative degree of divine beauty and excellence with which our imaginations clothe the angels of heaven, the ultimum of that approximation was attained by Jeannette as she knelt there alone in the calm, beautiful night, and uttered her simple prayer.

It was no one particular feature in the picture that made it divine. It was the combined effect of holiness, beauty, attitude, circumstance, sensation.

There, in the calm and silent night-time, with the mellow moonlight's broken rays falling through the latticed woodbine upon her pale, fair face, upturned in holy supplication to heaven; with no vestige of worldly passion or feeling traced thereon; with her trembling little hands clasped above her, and her half-closed eyes suffused in tears; her soul speaking in every feature; and while no voice or sound broke in upon the sacred stillness of the scene, from the depths of that pure soul was issuing a prayer — for — whom?

For him, who, to gratify a selfish wish, had coolly, deliberately and dispassionately blighted the holiest, the fondest and the dearest earthly hopes that gentle woman knows. For him who had poisoned the very springs of happiness and turned the current of her young heart into bitterness and gall. Is there not something else in the human heart besides selfishness after all?

Henry Melton thought so as he stood concealed behind the woodbine and gazed in breathless admiration upon this heavenly picture. Love her? There were no words to express the absolute intensity of his passion.

Apart from the heart's love, Henry cherished for Jeannette a spiritual admiration — a pure and intensely sacred love which had its origin in the soul. A love which made him look up to her, and caused him to associate her in his mind with the very angels of light. He felt as he gazed upon her in the beautiful attitude of supplication, and heard her earnest prayer

of meditation, that he might bow the knee to her in the same spirit that moved her soul in her prayer to heaven.

Jeannette arose from her kneeling posture and wiped away the tears with which her fair cheeks had been suffused. Again she looked out towards the silvery moon and the glowing heavens; and as she watched the twinkling stars she thought they seemed to be smiling upon her, and her eyes caught some of their tender light, and her face was radiant—aye, radiant with divine beauty and love as she softly murmured: "God is good, and He will answer my prayers."

There was a slight, rustling noise in the dried leaves of the woodbine, and a low voice at her side pronounced:

"Even before they found utterance in words they were answered in part, Jeannette. He has brought him back; the father and the son are reconciled; it is with you by His aid to bless them both in time and in eternity."

Jeannette was speechless. Her first impulse was to rush into her lover's arms, but with wonderful self-control she restrained her feelings, and sat *tremblingly* awaiting his explanation.

"You do not comprehend. I have just come from the bedside of my dear father, and I am commissioned by him to crave your forgiveness for the bitter pangs he has caused you. He is now your Christian brother, Jeannette; and he begs you in the name of your common faith to forget the past and learn to love him.

I come from him to urge you to be his daughter — and my blessed little angel wife. Jeannette, oh, Jeannette, repay me now with one token of your love for these long months of unspeakable anguish and pain."

With a little cry of joy, Jeannette Evarts threw herself into her lover's arms.

Reader, let us drop the curtain.

* * * * * *

Horace Evarts, alone in his room, was startled by the abrupt and unexpected entrance of Henry. The friends had scarcely embraced each other, when the latter, in a tone of the most joyful excitement, exclaimed:

"Horace, my dearest friend, I am the very happiest man this hour in all the wide world. Rejoice with me, for I tell you again that I am the very happiest man to-day in all the universe."

"To-night, you mean, Melton."

"No, Horace, to-day. For it is day. The brightest, the loveliest, the most glorious day that ever dawned on my life. My soul's morning, Horace."

"What is the matter with you? Are you dreaming?"

"Dreaming? If this is dreaming, may I never awake."

"Well then, tell me."

"I can not tell you. I can't talk. I'm so happy."

"Has Jeannette anything to do with your feelings?"

"Jeannette — Jeannette? That 's too good. Why, my boy, she has everything to do with it. No, not

everything. My father has much to do with it; you have much to do with it; everybody has something to do with it, and, Horace, we are all so happy."

"By the powers, if you don't explain yourself, Melton, I will think you have gone crazy."

"Listen then, while I tell you why I am the happiest man in the world. Jeannette and I are going to be married — married soon, my boy; and you are going to be married soon — married to Nora Lavine —"

"Don't mock me, Melton. In God's name, do not trifle with me or —"

"I do not trifle with you, Horace. Listen to me. I have seen MacKenzie."

"The utterly accursed villain! What have I to do with him?"

"Nothing, Horace; he is dead now —"

"And in perdition, it is to be hoped."

"Two days ago I bent over his dying form."

"I thank you for the act, and yet I am sorry that *my* hand did not spare yours the deed."

"You are mistaken, Horace. I did not slay him; but one did whose sister he had ruined —"

"The infernal wretch! he met his reward at last."

"Calm yourself, my dear friend. I am going to tell you news that will make your life happy for all time."

"No news can affect me now, Melton, but go on."

"MacKenzie, on his death-bed, made a revelation."

"Go on."

"This deposition of the dying man, established beyond all doubt the purity and innocence of Nora Lavine. My dear friend, what is the matter?"

"Melton, if you trifle with me, I 'll curse you to the day of my death."

"Horace, my brother, do you not know me? *Could I* trifle with you on this subject? Here," taking from his pocket a folded manuscript, "is the incontestable evidence of the fact that Nora Lavine has been made the innocent victim of cruel circumstances — that she is as pure as an angel, and that she was always true to you. Take it, Horace, and thank God."

CHAPTER XXXI.

CLOSE OF THE LIFE STORY.

WITH the exception of Jeannette Evarts and a few other friends, who clung to Nora Lavine with more than sisters' love, Elmwood had few visitors, and the occupants seldom went anywhere.

People, however, had talked more than usual of late, about Nora, and her social status was less precarious and anomalous. Some sour cynics there were, it is true, who turned their eyes away at her approach, and deafened their ears at the sound of her name; but very many more of the best people of the village said that she had been cruelly slandered; said that the light that shone in her face could emanate from none but the purest heart, and that she was living under a cloud, that was false as it was black.

The brawny blacksmith of honest heart, whose little sick child had received kind ministrations from her hands, walked slowly as he passed along, and looked over the white palings where Nora tended her flowers and hummed a song; and he looked as long as he could, and when he was out of sight, quickened his gait suddenly, and clenched his strong, rough hands, and we heard the emphatic mutter: "A vile lie to the base coward who ever speaks evil of her."

The poor, sick widow woman, with the helpless little infant, watched her as she came with her basket

of fruits and cake and wine; and thought she had the softest tread, and the kindest look, and the gentlest manner, and that her face was the most beautiful that she had ever seen, and that it looked like the face of an angel. So it might have done; for Nora Lavine was more beautiful than ever, and her trials had made her heroic. But Nora saw no way out of the shadow, though she felt that God does all things well, and on this faith she calmly rested.

So the days went on.

* * * * * *

A bright light burned in the pretty parlor at Elmwood, and Nora sat on a sofa, and she was alone.

On her lap lay an open book. It was Milton's "Paradise Regained." One soft, white, little hand rested between the open pages, while the other, with the elbow on the arm of the sofa, supported her head. Her long eyelashes almost touched her cheek, for her eyes were half closed, and they looked straight before her to the bright figures on the carpet, which seemed to dance in the cheery lamp-light. Nora was more beautiful than ever. Her faith had made her beauty sublime.

Silently the mother entered, and quietly walked to where her daughter sat, and kissed her. Then she took a letter from her pocket and sat down. They read it together. It was the same hour in which the events of our last chapter were transpiring. The letter was from a dearly loved one, in a far distant land, and it was written at—

"City Guanaxuato, Republic of Mexico.

"My Beloved Sister and Niece:—After your unusually long silence, during which my anxious love imagined all manner of evil, your affectionate favor of —— ult. came at last to my relief. From your letter I infer that you did not receive the preceding communication, in which I told you, in detail, of certain negotiations which were in progress for a compromise of the suit which had been instituted in your name and my own against the Government of Mexico for certain moneys or estates, of which our family was dispossessed, on the occasion of the sad, but heroic death of my noble father, and the final collapse of the cause which he and other patriotic Mexican leaders espoused against the tyranny of the then existing Government. The forms and systems which there prevailed have, as you know, undergone material modification and changes; and though our beautiful land has occasionally been convulsed by the throes of internecine strife, we have a good strong Government now, and the principles which are dominant are identically those for which my honored and lamented father labored and fought to establish.

"Our authorities, immediately after a substantial and authentic representation of all the facts in the case, manifested a cheerful readiness to make just and honorable indemnity; and they have actually paid into my hands the sum of seventy thousand dollars as a complete and final settlement of the whole matter. Although our property, which was seized and confiscated, was worth five times the amount restored, I

think you will agree with me that we have done well to recover, after a lapse of so long a time, such a large sum as that stated.

"One half of this amount you know belongs to *you*, and it is now in my hands, subject to your orders. If you wish me to invest it for you, I will do so to the best of my judgment; but I would suggest that it would be probably better to have the funds transferred to several strong banking houses of New York and Philadelphia — at least for the present. It is my impression that safer securities and better investments can be found in the States where you are than *here;* and if, as you say, you intend to make your present home a life one, it would be wiser and more convenient for you to have your money within ready reach.

"In some former letters, we have discussed the feasibility of a six months' visit from you, and I flatter myself that my arguments quite convinced you that such a plan was not only practicable, but that its execution would afford you much benefit and pleasure.

"We have here the finest climate, the best water, and some of the grandest scenery on the earth. My means — independent of that lately gained — are ample; my home commodious. I am fond of society, and our society just here is as good as any that the Republic affords. Every thing that can add to your happiness shall be brought to bear, and any expense or pains that I may incur will be so much happiness to me; for above all that I have to love in this world, you two are naturally and of course the dearest.

"In conclusion, I would ask you to bear in mind the

fact that I am always delighted to hear from you, and I shall expect letters regularly and often.

"With renewed assurances of my tenderest regards, I am sincerely,

"EUGENE LAVINE."

The mother and the daughter looked at each other, and saw dimly, for each was looking through a mist. Then they talked happily over the letter; and the mother said she believed "that God would make all things even, and that it would not be long before He would drive the darker cloud away." Then without a moment's warning, they were astonished by an apparition, and electrified with the words and the action—

"Behold me, Nora Lavine, in an agony of remorse, prostrate at your feet! Can you forgive me, or shall I die?"

The bewildered maiden rose from her seat, and her face was whiter than spotless marble, and a bright, but almost meaningless light shone in her lustrous eyes, as she stood looking down into the burning eyes that were gazing up into hers; and she trembled as a little withered leaf would quiver when snows fall and winter breezes blow.

"Forgive him! Mother, did he say *forgive?*"

"Yes, Nora, *forgive me!* Forgive my cruel abandonment. Forgive my cowardly desertion, in the first hour of her need and her sorrow, the noble woman whom I had sworn to love through good and ill—the only woman I had ever loved—the truest, and the purest, and the best woman that Heaven's sunlight ever fell upon."

Nora looked about amazed, and then sat down on the carpet at her mother's feet; and laying her little head on her mother's lap, raised her eyes pleadingly to hers.

"What is this, dear mother? Am I ill? Wake me, mother, if I dream."

Mrs. Lavine looked to where Horace Evarts still knelt; looked into eyes that were almost wild with an anguish of suspense; looked to the trembling hand that clasped a roll of crumpled pages, and with a voice whose tone she could not control, tremulously said:

"Speak, Horace Evarts. In pity, if aught you know, speak."

He stood erect, and advancing a step, said with an intensity of feeling that gave his voice a deep, hollow tone:

"If aught I know? I know that I have been insane. I know what curse the hour I once doubted. I know that Nora is all that is pure and noble and good. I know that MacKenzie is dead, and that I have here in my hand his dying deposition — a legal declaration which fully establishes that which all but cowards might have known before. I know that if Nora can forgive the infidelity that made her life wretched, the weak faith that was once so easily shaken, that faith will never waver again. I know that this love I have for her has never abated — that it will never die. I know that if she can *not* forgive me, the sun that will bring the morrow's dawn will shine on the grave of a life forever set in gloom. Behold my hands stretched out for you! Nora Lavine, my heart is dying for you!"

The amazed look was gone; and Nora arose from her kneeling posture at her mother's feet, and with perfect calmness and without a word or a tear, slowly walked to where her lover stood; and while her face was shining with a light that had never been seen there before, gently placed her arms around her lover's neck, and laid her little head with its tangled tresses upon his shoulder. Then we heard these words, and they came from the heart's depths:

"For our deliverance, and for Thy loving kindness, Heavenly Father, help us to love Thee, and to worship Thy holy name forever." Then was a great gush of tears. The happy heart could hold no more.

One little minute, in which the sorrows of many months were lost forever! We turned our eyes away, and we could hardly see the bright figures on the carpet, as we looked downwards. We walked to the window, and saw a million twinkling stars in a sky where there was no speck of cloud. We saw a great full moon shining straight down upon the earth, silvering the shrubbery and the house-tops, and making a thousand diamonds of the glittering pebbles in the gravel walk. Our ears caught the sound of distant music as it floated on the breeze. We turned our eyes to happy faces and knew that happy hearts needed no music from without. Just then the cheery voice of a brave watchman was heard, as it rang out on the night air—"One o'clock, and all 's well!" And we turned our eyes to happy faces, and knew that happy hearts were swelling with the glorious echo—"*First hour of the morning, and* ALL IS WELL."

Then Nora unclasped her arms from around her lover's neck, and took one of his hands in hers, and both moved to where the mother stood, and knelt there together at her feet. And a voice which might have been an angel's voice, whispered:

"Bless us, mother."

Then, as a holy light shone in the mother's eye, she placed a hand on each head; and we saw her look upward; and saw the holy light shining through a film of tears, and saw the lips tremble and quiver, but we heard no words, for *it was the soul that was speaking.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONCLUSION.

THERE was a life-giving element in the crisp, invigorating air of that bright October morning. The clear skies had a deeper hue; the sun's rays felt more genial. The birds chirped more cheerily in the old trees, and they seemed inspired with new life as they shook their gaudy feathers, and trilled their lays in the sunshine. The parti-colored leaves reflected the golden light, as they floated on the undulating air, and there seemed to be a music in their rustle, as the gentle breezes hurried them along. There was a merrier sound in the laborer's hopeful song, and the business man had a more animated air, as he briskly went his way. All the village seemed astir with some joyous excitement, and the chimes of the church bells had a tone more musical and gladder than ever before, for they were ringing the anthem of a happy, double marriage.

The feasts and convivialities that followed! Myrtle Lawn was in the zenith of its beauty. A bright banner of "welcome" floated over the entrance gate; the portico was arched with evergreen, and the inner walls were decorated with all the taste and beauty that skilled hands and lavish expenditure could give. Its parlors and halls were filled with beautiful ladies and gallant men; and the softest strains of music, mingled with

the perfume of a thousand flowers, thrilled the senses, and filled the air. It was such a festival as even that luxurious and genial home never saw before; such an array of superb bridal gifts! One which excited the greatest admiration for its exquisite beauty and richness was a magnificent cross of diamonds, and a chain of rich pearls, the gift of the wealthy owner of Melton Mansion, to Horace Evarts' bride. While a number of enthusiastic admirers were commenting on the excellence of the gift, and the munificence of the donor, he quietly stepped to Jeannette's side; and, tenderly kissing her fair blushing cheek, whispered in her ear, "little daughter is not forgotten," and placed in her hand what appeared to be only a little rattling piece of worthless paper, but what on opening proved to be a bank check, payable to herself at sight, for fifty thousand dollars.

* * * * * *

The steamer glided o'er the placid wave. The rays of the setting sun fell on the glittering spray about her prow and sides, and made a thousand sparkling gems.

Jeannette, with her little head and its wealth of brown tresses resting on her husband's shoulder, looked out over the gilded waters. Her thoughts for a minute had been back with the hopes, the disappointments, the trials of the past; its final fullness of love and joy. Then again she gazed over the waters, and looked up to the dear noble one on whose arm she leaned. She felt that strong, loving arm encircling her. She felt in her soul the tenderness of his eyes. She felt his warm kiss upon her brow, and cheek, and lips, and with

emotions of unspeakable tenderness, of thrilling hope and trembling ecstasy, her thoughts went out into the future; and while her eyes were filled with tears, in which there was a world of loving meaning, she turned her head, and in his bosom hid her blushing face.

With their hands clasped in each other's; with silent lips, but with souls full of unutterable things, Horace and his bride, stood leaning over the sides of the vessel, looking down into the bright, deep waters. Anon, a single tear trembled on the downcast lids of the fond young bride, and Horace Evarts saw it fall and forever lose itself in the waters.

"*A tear*, little darling?"

"A pitying thought, dear husband, of the poor, lost one. A prayer that God may rest his soul."

"Oh, Nora, my darling little wife, such charity as this is truly divine. Well, be it so. I can but catch some inspiration from your angelic spirit, and in the great excess of my love and my happiness, I, too can forgive him, and say 'God rest his soul.' But, darling, with your prayer let all thought of him forever cease, even as all our troubles are, with his name, forever gone. With that tear let all memory of him forever fade, even as that holy tear is forever lost in this ocean of waters."

THE END.

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